

THE CHILDREN'S YEAR

FIFTY-TWO ADDRESSES
TO BOYS AND GIRLS 

BY
J. MORGAN GIBBON



THE CHILDREN'S YEAR

THE CHILDREN'S YEAR

FIFTY-TWO SHORT ADDRESSES
TO BOYS AND GIRLS

BY

J. MORGAN GIBBON

AUTHOR OF "THE GOSPEL OF FATHERHOOD" "THE DISCIPLE'S PRAYER"
"DISCOURSES ON ST. JOHN" ETC. ETC.

"Dear, harmless age! the short, swift span
Where weeping virtue parts with man.
An age of mysteries! which he
Must live twice that would God's face see."
HENRY VAUGHAN, *Childhood*.

MANCHESTER
JAMES ROBINSON
BRIDGE STREET

1903

CONTENTS



	PAGE
1. JACK	I
2. CHRISTMAS DAY	9
3. SHINING LIVES	18
“ God make my life a little light, Within the world to glow ; A little flame that burneth bright Wherever I may go.”	
4. A FLOWER PRAYER	23
“ God make my life a little flower, That giveth joy to all, Content to bloom in native bower Although its place be small.”	
5. GOD’S POEMS	30
“ God make my life a little song, That comforteth the sad ; That helpeth others to be strong, And makes the singer glad.”	
6. A LITTLE STAFF	34
“ God make my life a little staff, Whereon the weak may rest ; That so what health and strength I have, May serve my neighbours best.”	

	PAGE
7. A LITTLE HYMN	39
"God make my life a little hymn Of tenderness and praise ; Of faith—that never waxes dim In all His wondrous ways."	
8. COMING TO JESUS	43
"Jesus said, Suffer" (or let) "the children come unto Me."—MATTHEW xix. 14.	
9. BLOCKING THE WAY	50
"Then were there brought unto Him little children, that He should lay His hands on them, and pray : and the disciples rebuked them."—MATTHEW xix. 13.	
10. THE ALMOND TREE	55
"What seest thou ? And I said, I see a rod of an almond tree."—JEREMIAH i. 11.	
11. GROWING UP	60
"And the child grew, and waxed strong, filled with wisdom : and the grace of God was upon Him."—LUKE ii. 40.	
12. RAIN AND SNOW	65
"For as the rain cometh down, and the snow from heaven, and returneth not thither, but watereth the earth, and maketh it bring forth and bud, that it may give seed to the sower, and bread to the eater."— ISAIAH lv. 10.	
13. THE GOLDEN PSALM	69
"I have said unto the Lord, Thou art my Lord : I have no good beyond Thee. As for the saints that are in the earth, they are the excellent in whom is all my delight."—PSALM xvi. 2, 3.	
14. A BAD MEMORY	74
"Yet did not the chief butler remember Joseph, but forgat him."—GENESIS xl. 23.	
15. WASTED SUNDAYS	80
"A hearer that forgetteth."—JAMES i. 25.	

	PAGE
16. THE ANIMALS' PRAYER	86
"If a bird's nest chance to be before thee in the way in any tree, or on the ground, with young ones or eggs, thou shalt not take the mother with the young: thou shalt in any wise let the mother go, but the young thou mayest take unto thyself; that it may be well with thee, and that thou mayest prolong thy days."—DEUTERONOMY xxii. 6, 7.	
17. "THOU"	92
"Then he said, Who shall begin the battle? And He answered, Thou."—I KINGS xx. 14.	
18. IMITATION	98
"Be ye therefore imitators of God, as beloved children."—EPHESIANS v. 1.	
19. SPRING-TIME	104
"For, lo, the winter is past, the rain is over and gone."—SONG OF SONGS ii. 11.	
20. FLOWERS AND BIRDS	109
"The flowers appear on the earth; the time of the singing of birds is come."—SONG OF SONGS ii. 12.	
21. LADIES AND GENTLEMEN	114
"Blessed are the meek; for they shall inherit the earth."—MATTHEW v. 5.	
22. WHAT IS IT ALL FOR?	119
"On that day went Jesus out of the house, and sat by the seaside."—MATTHEW xiii. 1.	
23. A LION STORY	124
"Benaiah the son of Jehoiada, went down also and slew a lion in a pit in a snowy day."—I CHRONICLES xi. 22.	
24. A QUEER EXCUSE	129
"Whoso robbeth his father or his mother, and saith, It is no transgression; the same is the companion of a destroyer."—PROVERBS xxviii. 24.	

	PAGE
25. THE CENSUS	134
“If a man have a hundred sheep, and one of them be gone astray, doth he not leave the ninety and nine, and go unto the mountains, and seek that which goeth astray?”—MATTHEW xviii. 12.	
26. THE WHITE SUNDAY	138
“To you is the promise, and to your children.”—ACTS ii. 39.	
27. “DENNOCH !”	144
“Nevertheless not as I will, but as Thou wilt.”—MATTHEW xxvi. 39.	
28. TWO FLASH-POINTS	148
“He that is slow to anger is better than the mighty.”—PROVERBS xvi. 32.	
29. NAGGING	153
“He that covereth a transgression”—(transgression means a fault or a sin ; anything that is wrong)—“he that covereth a transgression seeketh love : but he that harpeth on a matter separateth friends.”—PROVERBS xvii. 9.	
30. BULLYING	158
“And the child grew, and was weaned : and Abraham made a great feast on the day that Isaac was weaned, and Sarah saw the son of Hagar the Egyptian, mocking.”—GENESIS xxi. 8, 9.	
31. THE LANGUAGE OF FLOWERS	163
“He hath made everything beautiful in its time.”—ECCLESIASTES iii. 11.	
32. CONSIDER THE LILIES	167
“Jesus said, Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow ; they toil not, neither do they spin.”—MATTHEW vi. 28.	
33. CAPITAL “I”	173
“Each one of you saith, I.”—I CORINTHIANS i. 12.	

CONTENTS

ix

	PAGE
34. JESUS CHRIST'S HOLIDAY	179
" And He saith unto them, Come ye yourselves apart into a desert place, and rest a while."—MARK vi. 31.	
35. YES !	185
36. A ROYAL HOUSE	189
" Whose house are we."—HEBREWS iii. 6.	
37. GATHERING OR SCATTERING	195
" He that gathereth not with Me scattereth."— MATTHEW xii. 30.	
38. THE EYE OF THE HEART	200
" The light that is in thee."—MATTHEW vi. 23.	
39. GOD'S GIFTS	204
" That Thou givest unto them they gather : Thou openest Thine hand, they are satisfied with good," —PSALM civ. 28.	
40. GOD'S VOICE	209
" The Lord called Samuel : and he said, Here am I. And he ran unto Eli, and said, Here am I ; for thou calledst me. And he said, I called not ; lie down again. And he went and lay down."—I SAMUEL iii. 4, 5.	
41. GOODNESS	214
" Samuel said unto Jesse, Are here all thy children ? And he said, There remaineth yet the youngest."— I SAMUEL xvi. 11.	
42. NUTTING	220
" I went down into the garden of nuts."—SONG OF SONGS vi. 11.	
43. SAFE IN GOD'S GREAT CARE	225
" But the very hairs of your head are all numbered," —MATTHEW x. 30.	
44. A LESSON IN PRAYER	230
" I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ."—EPHESIANS iii. 14.	

	PAGE
45. A STORY OF FOUR	237
“Then they said one to another, We do not well : this day is a day of good tidings, and we hold our peace : now therefore come, let us go and tell the king’s household.”—2 KINGS vii. 9.	
46. JESUS CALLED A LITTLE CHILD	244
“Jesus called a little child unto Him, and set him in the midst of them.”—MATTHEW xviii. 2.	
47. PRAISING GOD	248
“Joshua said unto Achan, My son, give, I pray thee, glory to the Lord God of Israel.”—JOSHUA vii. 19.	
48. OUR SHEPHERD	252
“The Lord is my Shepherd ; I shall not want.”— PSALM xxiii. 1.	
49. THE EVERY-DAY CHRIST	257
“Then shall the righteous answer Him, saying, Lord, when saw we Thee an hungered, and fed Thee? or thirsty, and gave Thee drink?”—MATTHEW xxv. 37.	
50. “FEED MY LAMBS”	261
“Jesus saith unto Peter, Feed My lambs.”—JOHN xxi. 15.	
51. AT TABLE	266
“Nevertheless He left not Himself without witness, in that He did good, and gave us rain from heaven, and fruitful seasons, filling our hearts with food and glad- ness.”—ACTS xiv. 17.	
52. CHRISTMAS STOCKINGS	270
“And Joseph commanded the steward of his house, saying, Fill the men’s sacks with food, as much as they can carry, and put every man’s money in his sack’s mouth. And put my cup, the silver cup, in the sack’s mouth of the youngest, and his corn money.”—GENESIS xliv. 1, 2.	

THE CHILDREN'S YEAR

FIFTY-TWO SHORT ADDRESSES TO BOYS AND GIRLS



I

JACK

JACK had come home for the Christmas holidays. There was no doubt of that. Children should be seen, not heard, some people tell us. But one would have to be very deaf indeed not to hear Jack. When Jack was at home everybody knew it. Mother knew it, for every door as it banged and slammed said "Jack" as plainly as a door could. The servants knew it, for Jack kept them all busy. The little ones knew it, for no one but Jack pinched their ears and called them strange names. The cat knew it, for who ever teased her and pulled her tail like Jack?

Yes! There could be no manner of doubt about it—Jack was home.

But who was Jack? What, don't you know Jack

Morton, who had been to a large school a hundred miles away? Of course you know him. Everybody knows Jack. How big was he? Well, that depends how you measure. If you measured him by feet, or even by inches, he was not a very big boy; but if you measured him by what he thought of himself, then you would find that Jack was a big, fine, noble boy. At school, indeed, the other boys did not measure in this way. They called him little Jack, fat Jack, greedy Jack, and the master sometimes called him stupid and lazy Jack.

But Jack held his own opinion about himself, and now that he had come home for Christmas, he meant to enjoy himself as much as possible. Whatever might happen to Elsie, Bill, or Baby, Jack meant to have a good time.

For the first few days all went very well. He was glad to be home, for one thing. He was not sorry to be free from lessons, either. Then it was rather fine to play the big brother to a really admiring audience. For he *was* big beside Elsie and Bill. What good listeners they were! How they enjoyed his stories of school fights, school ways, and school boys. He told them about Thompson and Jones, whose fathers were so rich that they could give their boys real ponies to ride in the holidays, and Brown minor, whose play-box was like a little tuck-shop.

"But isn't there a boy called Willie?" asked Bill. "Oh yes! but he's such a little milksop," said Jack, "he doesn't count." And he felt very big indeed as he snuffed out poor Willie!

Then his mood changed. He began to pity himself because he hadn't a pony like Thompson and plenty of pocket-money like Jones and Brown.

There were no books worth reading even in his home, nor any fellows to play with. So he grumbled and found fault with things till he made himself and everybody else miserable.

Well, but Christmas Eve came at last. The children had made what they called a jolly tea. Even Jack had done well at table, for, however miserable he might be, his appetite was uncommonly good.

Then they all sat round the fire and talked. Of course they talked about Father Christmas. Who he was, where he came from, how ever he managed to come down the chimney. Elsie said she was sure that he was their own father. But Bill knew better. How could their father come down the chimney? And how could he get all the good things for all the other boys and girls? Baby nodded to show that she agreed with Bill. But Jack sneered, and called Bill a little silly. Of course there was no Father Christmas, said Jack, and that settled it.

Presently bedtime came. When Bill got to his room he took care to hang up a big stocking where anyone, let alone Father Christmas, could see it. Jack too put up a stocking, and then said that he meant to stay awake to watch his father filling the two stockings. He even promised to wake Bill so that he might see for himself. But Bill declared he would stay awake too, and about two minutes after fell fast asleep.

But Jack watched hard, watched and watched, ever so long; how long he did not know. At last, however, the room seemed suddenly to fill with light, and he saw Father Christmas step gravely down from the chimney grate. Of course Jack knew him at once by his picture. He was a jolly old man with a rather red face and a long white beard. Instead of a hat he wore ivy leaves on his head. He had a big overcoat, whose pockets bulged out with Christmas presents. It was quite wonderful to see how like his picture he was.

After looking round the room, he filled Bill's stocking to the very top. Then he came to Jack's bedside and said in a loud whisper, "Jack! grumbling Jack! come with me!" Jack felt he must go, so he dressed in no time and followed the old man over the grate and up the chimney. It was quite easy to walk on nothing, much easier than going upstairs. A fine carriage waited outside the chimney-top with four ponies with feet like wings. "Jump in," said Father Christmas, and off they went at a smart gallop over the tops of the houses, over open fields and dark woods, over hills all white with snow and rivers shining in the moonlight. It was a fine drive. At last, however, the carriage pulled up at a very big house. Father Christmas and Jack popped down the chimney and came out in a large, nicely furnished bedroom, and there fast asleep was Thompson, Jack's hero and chum. Father Christmas had a lot of things for Thompson, and when Jack saw what went into the stocking he envied Thompson, as

indeed he often did. It was the same at the next house they came to, young Jones'. All sorts of presents lay piled on chairs and tables, and his stocking was filled to the brim. "Lucky dog!" said Jack. But when they came to the third house, which was Brown minor's, Jack's teeth fairly watered as he saw the play-box with its stock of cake and tuck. "You *have* given Brown a lot," he said. "Oh, that's nothing," answered Father Christmas; "come along." The great carriage flew through the crisp air. Far beneath them sounded the songs of the waits. Above them the great stars glittered and twinkled, and Jack could not help thinking of the Star of Bethlehem which the Wise Men saw, and he wished he could see it.

"Hark the herald angels sing
Glory to the new-born King,"

sang the carollers in the street below, and Jack could not help feeling that Christmas meant more than presents and games and pudding and cake. It had *something* to do with Jesus Christ.

But suddenly the carriage pulled up outside the smallest and poorest house Jack had seen that night. "Who lives here?" he asked. "Come and see," said the old man. In they went, and there fast asleep on a little bed lay Willie, the boy of no account, the boy who had neither a pony to ride, nor fine clothes to wear, nor money to spend. He looked happy enough in his sleep, and smiled as though he had had a pleasant dream.

Willie's stocking looked very small as it hung over the bed, and Jack felt sure it would never hold all the good things Father Christmas would want to put in it, for the old man looked at Willie as if he loved him very much. But it proved to be quite big enough, for, to Jack's surprise, Willie did not get many gifts. Indeed, Jack felt rather sorry for him as he thought of the heaps of things he had seen lying about in the other boys' rooms. "Won't you give him anything else?" pleaded Jack. Father Christmas looked at him for a moment in silence and said, "No, my boy, not one single thing more will I give him. He is the best off of all you have seen to-night." Jack's eyes showed quite plainly that he did not believe what his ears heard. "Well, come then, and see for yourself," and stepping close up to the sleeping boy the old man showed Jack a heart-shaped locket that lay on Willie's breast. It was made of the finest gold, and set with diamonds that shone like little stars. Something like a silvery mist seemed to breathe from the locket and form a little cloud above the sleeper. Presently Jack felt as if a gentle dew were falling from the cloud, and looking up he saw that the light from the diamonds shining on this soft rain made an arch of rainbows over the bed. The room was filled with the scent of all sweet things. And a sound of singing was on the air.

Willie smiled in his sleep, and looked happier than any boy had ever looked, Jack thought.

"He doesn't look as if he wanted any more of my things, does he?" asked the old man. "No," said

Jack, "but what is that locket?" "It is the Bethlehem locket," said Father Christmas. "I have one also; that is why I go about to give and not to get," and Jack saw the light of the Golden Heart on the old man's breast.

"*But what does it mean?*" he asked. "Why, Jack," was the answer, "whose birthday is it to-day?" "Well, of course it is—it is—it is the birthday of Jesus Christ," said the boy, "but I had not thought of it in that way." "No, my boy, and that is why you grumbled and made yourself miserable. That is not the way to be happy on Christmas Day or any other day. Now try Willie's way, my way, the way of the Wise Men that came from the East with gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh. Get the Bethlehem locket and wear it, Jack. Wear it as long as you live. Good-bye. Merry Christmas, Jack, and many of them." With that he vanished, and Jack, to his great surprise, found himself lying snugly in his own little room, and heard Elsie and Bill and Baby singing a children's hymn at the door of father's room—

"The wise may bring their learning,
The rich may bring their wealth;
And some may bring their greatness,
And some bring strength and health:
We too would bring our treasures
To offer to our King;
We have no wealth nor learning:
What shall we children bring?"

Jack listened with all his might. "What shall we children bring?"—bring, not get? Jack had

never thought of that before. Then the hymn went on—

“We'll bring Him hearts that love Him,
We'll bring Him thankful praise,
And young souls meekly striving
To walk in holy ways.”

“We'll bring Him hearts that love Him.” It flashed on Jack in a moment that the Bethlehem locket is Love—the gift that grows the more it is given away ; the *wisest* thing and the best thing in all the world. Closing his eyes, the boy prayed a real little prayer of his own: “O Lord! help me to be a better fellow. Help me not to be greedy and silly. Help me not to be a coward nor a cad. For Jesus Christ's sake. Amen.”

When the holidays were over his father and mother and everybody else were sorry to part with him. They said that he had been a really good boy. But Jack said he had had a good time.

II

CHRISTMAS DAY

I

IT was the very day before Christmas. Tom was home for the holidays, a little taller, a good deal stouter, and much wiser than ever—almost, than anybody. Of course, it was very jolly to come home, and all that sort of thing, but Tom soon began to grow dissatisfied. Things were so slow, he complained to his sister and brothers several times a day, a fact which did not make them any happier, though neither Bill nor Baby had a notion of what he meant by “slow”—but they guessed by his looks and tones that he meant something that was not very nice.

He had spent the morning mooning about the house, glancing at Christmas pictures and cramming himself with whatever he could lay hands on in the shape of sweetstuffs and fruit, and now, after dinner, he was lying at full length on the sofa, grumbling because things at home were so slow.

Bill sat in the window wondering whether the cart which he could see coming down the road

would stop with a hamper of good things at their door. Baby was playing with the kitten on the rug. Elsie sat at the piano softly playing "Home, sweet Home" to herself, in order to shut out the sound of Tom's grumbling. "Precious dull place, I call it." "Sweet, sweet home," said the keys. "Ah, you should see Wilkins Junior's place—his father's no end of a swell, and lives in a great castle!"

"Be it ever so humble,
There's no place like home,"

said the piano.

"Oh, do stop that!" cried Tom; but before the keys could answer, their mother came in and said, "Now, you young lazy-bones, go out for a good stroll this bright afternoon. Yes, you too!" she said to Tom, who looked several things at her, "you'll be as fat as a Christmas goose if you go on like this!"

So having put on their wraps and gloves, they all started for the wood close by their house, of which they never got tired.

"I wish," said Bill presently, "something would happen; wouldn't it be jolly to meet a fairy!" "Fairy, indeed," said Tom, "there ain't any fairies, silly." "There ay—, there is, I mean there are," said Bill, "I know there are." "Nonsense! it's only little kiss-mammy kids like you that believe in fairies," said Tom. "Better be that than a fat goose," said somebody. "Who said that?" cried Tom furiously. "I don't know," said Elsie; "I didn't." "Nor did I," said Bill.

They walked on a while silent and wondering along a path that they did not remember ever to have seen before. "But I tell you," continued Tom, "there are no fairies." "Oh, what a whopper! Ha! ha! ha!" said a queer little voice that sounded as if it came out of the holly bushes that lined the path, and in a moment there stepped out from the bushes the funniest-looking little fellow you ever saw. He was dressed in bright green with gold stripes and buttons; he had a little cane in his hand; his eyes seemed to dance with fun and good-humour, and at the moment he had a smile that went right across his face from ear to ear. "'Scuse my jokes," he said, bowing to Elsie, "but really boy-folk and girl-folk are such fun, especially the very knowing ones."

"Excuse me," said Tom, "who are you? What are you? What do you mean?"—"Oh, stop," said the other, putting his fingers in his ears. "Don't go on asking so many questions all at once; it makes me bad. I had such a sickener of questions when I was young, in an examination, where a lot of grown-ups, as ought to have known better, sat and asked us young ones questions all day long, I've not got over it yet."

"Well, but," said Tom, "you can surely tell us your name?" "Yes, I think I can," was the answer; "my name is Snap, and now don't ask any more questions just yet, but come along with me, and we'll see what we shall see."

So they went on together merrily enough. By and by Elsie said, "Snap, may I ask you a question now?" "Oh yes," he said, "ask away."

"You spoke of examination," she said; "did you go to school then?" "Certainly!" "And learnt addition, subtraction, multiplication, and division?" "Ra—ther!" he said. "Not at school, of course, though, for I went to school to forget them." "What do you mean?" asked she. "Well," he said, "the subtraction I learnt was taking some apples from a garden next door, then I added some more from another garden, next I went on to division, and shared an apple with my little brother—I ate the outer part and he had the core." "Did you go through the multiplication table?" asked Bill. "Not quite through it, but very nearly, for the master laid me on his table, and oh! didn't he multiply, up to about twelve times nine, I guess, or more, till I quite forgot the addition and subtraction I had learned." "Queer school I call it," said Tom. "Just splendid," said Snap.

"But now, let's jog on, and I'll show you some things in Fairyland that visitors from your country don't often see." As he spoke they saw a great big house, all shining like silver. "Oh, what a lovely place! That must be the Queen of the Fairies' palace," they said. Snap smiled. "No, our Queen does not live there. That's the 'House of the Silver School.'" "School!" they cried in surprise. "Yes, that's one of our Schools of Forgetting, where young fairies go to learn to forget some things they learned much too soon and too well." "Such as addition, etc.?" asked Bill. Snap nodded. "Shall we have a peep?" So they went up to the great broad silver steps, in between massive silver pillars, through a

door of silvered oak, into a great room full of fairy children all busy at their lessons—some doing one thing, others another. But what struck Tom most of all was their curious way of spelling. Tom himself had a curious way of spelling some words—but he had never spelt like these.

Teacher. "Who can spell '*Happy*'?" One cried, "R-I-C-H." "No." Another said, "G-O-O-D." "Right," said the master. "Once again, all together, 'G-O-O-D—Happy.'"

"Now spell '*Miserable*.'" "B-A-D." "Right," said the teacher. "Now, all together, 'B-A-D—Miserable.'" "Well," said Tom, as he came away, "if that doesn't beat all." "I think it really does," said Elsie; "but it's quite right."

II

Going on a little farther they saw something so grand that it nearly took their breath away—it was a palace of pure gold. They had never dreamt of anything so splendid. "Here it is at last!" they said, "the Queen of the Fairies' house!" "Nonsense," said Snap drily, "our Queen doesn't live there—that's the college where the grown-up fairies go to learn to forget." "Forget what?" "Oh, all the rubbish they hear talked down in your country about money. Here they get nothing but gold—gold chairs, gold tables, gold plates, gold knives, gold beds, gold sheets, and gold quilts—gold everything till they get sick of it, and learn to forget they ever cared for it. But come along."

III

"Look there!" They looked. "I say!" said Tom. "Oh!" said Baby. "Whew!" said Bill. "How lovely!" said Elsie. And it was lovely, for it was the Dome of Diamonds. A whole palace built of jewels. The very bushes and flowers in that garden glittered with jewels—the pillars were of ruby, the doors of pearl, the walls and roof shone with diamonds.

"What is it?—is it heaven?" asked Elsie. Snap burst out laughing. "That's the High School for Girls!" he said. "For girls?" "Yes—where the girl fairies learn to forget their love of finery. At first some of them think such a lot about jewels and finery, and that sort of thing, that they get to be selfish, ugly, disagreeable fairies—and then they are sent to the Dome of Diamonds, and they see and hear so much of them that they soon learn to forget that they ever cared for such trash."

"I say, Elsie!" whispered Tom, "just one term in there wouldn't do somebody I know any harm, would it?" Poor Elsie blushed scarlet, but she said nothing, for Baby was shouting, "Look! look!"

IV

And there, right in front of them, was a big castle with great walls on every side, and they could only see it through the bars of a very big gilded gate. "That," said Snap, "is generally called 'Castle Grumpy'—really, it's a sort of what you call a gaol

—where the very wicked fairy people are put.” “Are there any wicked fairies?” asked Baby. “Oh yes!” said Snap. “What do they do?” asked Bill, who liked stories about pirates and highway robbers and frighteners. “Oh, all sorts of bad things,” said Snap. “Some grumble, others are stuck-up, others are always bragging about themselves. Some are selfish and idle, others bully fairies smaller than themselves. Oh, it’s dreadful to think of it,” he said. “I feel quite ashamed.”

“And are they severely punished?” asked Elsie. “Very,” he said. “Hard labour?” asked Tom. “Worse than that, much,” he said; “hard idleness. They are not allowed to do or give anything—or help anyone. They sit all day listening to others grumbling, till oh! they long and long to be allowed to do, and give, and help.” “Is grumbling against the law?” asked Bill. “I should think so,” said Snap. “Tom,” said Elsie slyly, “you must be careful while you’re here!”

V

“Now look at that,” said Snap. “What do you think of that?” pointing to a little house with no silver, gold, or diamonds about it, but very neat and clean. “You don’t think the Queen lives there, do you?” “N—no, surely not,” they said; “that’s no bigger or grander than our house at home! Indeed, it’s very like our house.” “Ah well, come in,” said Snap.

They went, and they were surprised to find the

inside still more like home—the same sort of rooms, the same sort of furniture. It was so like, that Elsie said to herself, “No, no! the Queen cannot live here!” In one room sat a gentleman very like their own father. In another room they saw a lady exactly like their mother, busy at work, and with her were two girls, very like Elsie and Baby. “That’s Sunbeam,” said Snap; “and the little one is Sing-Song.”

Presently a boy, the very image of Tom, came in, his arms full of holly branches. He sang, as he entered the room—

“Here’s mistletoe and holly,
Let one and all be jolly,
Let’s banish melancholy,
Now we’re all at home.”

Following him came a boy the very picture of Bill, lugging a young fir tree, to make a Christmas tree. He made a bow, and sang to a merry tune these words—

“Should you find your tea’s not nice,
Listen to my sage advice—
Put more sugar in the cup,
Stir, and stir—then drink it up.
For here’s a fact, so please you take it,
Your tea is what you like to make it.”

“Encore! encore!” shouted Snap. The boy smiled, and then went on—

“Should you find your home is slow,
Here’s a hint before you go—
Put more sugar in the cup,
Stir, and stir—then drink it up.
For ’tis a fact, so please you take it,
Home is what you like to make it.”

"That's right," cried Sunbeam—

"'Tis not what Santa Claus brings,
'Tis not mince pies and sweet things,
It is the tune the heart sings
That makes a 'Home, sweet Home.'"

Then Sing-Song chimed in—

"Up in the steeple, 'Ding, ding, dong,'
The merry bells ring, the merry bells ring;
And in the heart of little Sing-Song
The merry bells ring, the merry bells ring."

Tom and Elsie, Bill and Baby could hardly keep still for pleasure. "Snap," they cried, "this is the jolliest little place we've seen in Fairyland! What is it, Snap?" "This," said the fairy, "is the best place in Fairyland, for this is home—the Queen's home—your home, if you like!"

"Oh, bravo!" said Tom. "Let's have another song; I'll lead off."

At that moment, however, a hand was laid on his arm, and, looking up, he saw his mother standing above him. "You've been dreaming, Tom," she said. "I don't know quite," he answered; "but I've seen such odd things, and oh! I have heard such lovely singing." "Was it anything like this?" asked Elsie, as once again she strummed "Home, sweet Home" on the keys. "Yes, yes!" cried Tom, "that's it. Let us all sing that." And they all did,

III

SHINING LIVES

“God make my life a little light,
Within the world to glow;
A little flame that burneth bright
Wherever I may go.”

I

AS I sit writing this sermon for the children, the daylight is fading from the sky. We have had no sunshine all day, although it is the sunny month of July. The wind is rising to a gale. The sea in front of the house where I write is becoming rough. I can see the tossing manes of the white horses in the bay. Clearly it is going to be what sailors call a “dirty night” at sea. And this is a very dangerous coast. A little way above the village are the “Cefn Sidan” sands. That means in English the Silken Ridge. They look so harmless, but a line of wrecks, reaching up as far as the eye can see, shows how dangerous they are. Vessel after vessel has come to grief here, one quite recently. She lies there a huge, broken thing, and one pities her every time one walks past. She was such a big, strong ship. But the Silken Sands soon made an end of

her. And if to-night a ship coming up the Channel should make a mistake and keep a little too much to the left, or if a ship going *down* the Channel should let the tide carry her ever so little too much to the right, she will be swept on to the pitiless death-trap in no time. By daylight the coast is safe enough; one can see the way very easily. But what chance has a ship in such a night as this? Even the stars are not shining to-night. But when I look out again into the night I see a gleam on the waters. That great black rock to the left is the Worm's Head, a most dangerous rock, but a clear light is shining upon it to tell the sailors to keep far enough from it. Down yonder to the right is Caldy Island. It too has a light that tells every ship to keep well out to sea to-night. Those two lights are put just where ships are most likely to take the wrong turn. They will shine all night long. However hard the wind blows it will not put these lights out. However high the sea may rise it will not be able to dim the little kindly lights. Those cruel Silken Sands, lying in wait beneath the waves like tigers in a brake, shall have no ship to-night.

There will be ships coming *down* Channel from Cardiff and Swansea. The danger meets them almost as soon as they start, and some ships have been wrecked within a few hours of leaving harbour. There will be other ships, too, coming *up* Channel after long, long voyages of weeks and months. They have passed many dangers, but they have the Silken Ridge yet to fear. They *might* easily be lost to-night. It has happened that vessels have

been wrecked on the doorstep, as it were. They had only a few more miles to go, but they never reached home, and they never will. There they lie, sinking deeper and deeper in the sand. But, thank God! the two little Welsh lights are shining merrily. The home-coming ships have been guided on their way by a chain of lights—lights in heaven above, lights on rocks in foreign lands, and now these two on Caldy and Worm's Head take their place as links in the great chain of light.

I don't think I could sleep to-night for thinking of men in peril on the sea were it not for those two lights and the vision they call up of the whole English coast lit up to show the way to ships that pass in the night.

Ah! but there is one other danger. What if two vessels coming different ways met in the dark, and so wrecked each other? What helps them to keep out of each other's way? A little light. Each one has a light at the masthead and other lights on either side. Thus with lights on land and lights in the ships themselves the sailor's life is made as safe as it can be.

II

Well, what beautiful, useful things those little lights are! Did Miss Betham-Edwards think of the coastwise lights of England when she made our hymn for us? and do we think of them when we sing—

“God make my life a little light,
Within the *world* to glow”?

It is a great thing to help the world as those two lights are helping it. A candle, said Jesus, giveth light to all that are in the house. But He told His disciples that they were "lights of the *world*." "Let your light so shine before men that they may see your good works and glorify your Father which is in heaven." We should not do anything in order to be seen. That is hypocrisy and pride. But goodness that is really good can't help being seen. It shines like a light, and helps others to go right.

"God make my life a little light" means, then, that we want to be made *very* good.

"To hide true worth from public view
Is burying diamonds in their mine.
All is not gold that glitters? True,
But all that is gold ought to shine."

III

Within the world to glow. Yes! shining goodness shines far. It helps the whole world. The man that tends that lamp on Caldy will never know how much good he is doing. He is helping the whole world of commerce. If you set a good example you will do more good than you will know till the last day. Take your place, then, in the great Chain of Light. Good lives are seen shining down the ages, and God wishes you to be a link in that chain. You can help no one by anything that you do as much as by being clearly and splendidly good. I once heard of a lighthouse man that used up all his oil for his cooking-stove, and when the dark,

rough night came he had no oil left for the light-house lamp. Ships were wrecked, lives were lost that night because one lamp was unlighted. Oh, never let your goodness become dim, never let your light go out! Let your lamp be burning always. Be faithful unto *death*. Your name may never become famous on earth, but God knows His lamp-bearers, and He will reward you. Thank God for good people, and may we be of them. Heartily and earnestly let us pray—

“God make my life a little light,
Within the world to glow.”

IV

A FLOWER PRAYER

“God make my life a little flower,
That giveth joy to all,
Content to bloom in native bower
Although its place be small.”

I

SOME prayers are meant to be said, others to be sung, and many may be either said or sung. For when we pray we do not merely ask for things; we worship also. You do not pray aright if you only ask God for something you want. Jesus told us to pray, saying, “Our Father, hallowed be Thy Name,” meaning that we worship whenever we ask God for anything. We must not ask anyhow, but reverently, thankfully, and humbly, ready to take whatever God thinks best for us.

Our hymns are full of prayers, and we should look out for these prayers as we go through our hymns. We should not pass them over without thinking. Here is another little prayer taken from the hymn which you all know and all like: “God make my life a little flower.” Now, do you *think*

as you say that? Do you think of flowers, how beautiful, wonderful, and sweet they are? Do you think of God who makes them all? Do you then think in passing of yourself, of your own life? Have you ever felt that you are not quite so beautiful in all your ways as you could be and should be? Do you as you sing really mean what you say? Do you care about being beautifully good? Do you *want* the God who makes flowers look so nice and smell so sweetly that everybody loves them, to make your life like these?

Well, if you ever have such thoughts as you sing—and I hope that you do have them—then you not only sing, but pray as well.

II

But now, have you chosen your flower? Flowers are of many sorts. Which of all the flowers you have ever seen would you wish to be like?

Here is a flower that I have brought with me. You all know it. It is a rose. We all love the rose. It is called the Queen of Flowers. That is because it is such a splendid flower. It is carved on the crown of the King. The Queen wears it on great days. One rose is large enough and fine enough to be set in a vase by itself, and even when it dies, its crumbled and colourless leaves can fill a room with sweet smell.

Well, there *are* people like that. Great, splendid, shining men and women. They make great names

for themselves. They do noble things. They win battles. They make laws. They write books. They discover secrets in the earth and the air. They fill the world with their fame. Everybody hears of them. All men admire and honour them. When they die they cannot be forgotten. Their names are seen in books and heard on men's lips age after age. These are the Rose people. They are the royal souls, the real kings and queens that rule this world by their greatness and goodness.

Well, I should like to think that there are here some boys and girls who belong to the great Rose tribe. There may be a clever lad or a clever girl in this church to-day to whom God has given great powers of mind. If so, let these pray for the help of His grace, so that they may make the best use of their powers. For the rose is as sweet to smell as it is fair to see. And the Rose people are never merely clever, merely great; they are good also. Bad, clever men are hateful. Only the memory of the *just* is blessed. Let the clever children, then, pray earnestly as they sing—

“God make my life a little flower,
That giveth joy to all.”

Let them pray for goodness to match their cleverness. Let them learn what that sweet poet Cowper said of the rose—

“I'll not be proud of my youth or my beauty,
Since both of them wither and fade,
But I'll earn a good name by well doing my duty;
That will scent like a rose when I'm dead.”

III

But here is another flower that I have brought. What is it? A lily? Yes. You are quite right. And what a lovely thing it is. Was ever anything whiter, cleaner, sweeter than this? Yet it grew out of black mud. How did it ever manage to become so white and sweet? By holding itself to the sun. It not only grows from mud, but it goes down like a diver into the depths of the lake. How does it manage to keep alive? Exactly as the diver manages. Only the lily is cleverer. The diver has a diving-dress when he sinks into the sea, and a very strange, ugly dress it is. Then he has to have air pumped down to him through a pipe from a machine on land. But the lily needs no such ugly diving-dress, nor any such clumsy machinery, nor anyone to help her at all. She can carry all the air she wants with her, and so live under water and come up again in all her loveliness.

Well, would you not like to know the lily's secret? Would you not like to know how to keep your soul clean in every company? To carry your own air with you? Yes, we all want that. We must try to keep near good people. But we must not depend entirely on our company. We cannot always choose our companions. There are some boys who are good in good company, but change and become bad if the company changes. They are like chameleons. They take whatever colour is nearest. But let us be of the Lily tribe. Jesus is called the Lily. Why? Because He was ever the same whatever happened

or whoever stood near. When evil men and women crowded round Him, He did not become like them. They became like Him. For as the lily sheds her sweet smell all round and scents everything in the room, the goodness of Jesus was a strong conquering goodness that made all things give way to it. He had the scent of the lily. He kept Himself in the light of God, who is *our* Sun. He filled Himself with God's spirit of love and truth, which is the breath of our life.

Children, pray for the Lily life. Pray for a goodness good enough and strong to hold its own everywhere, able to see God always and breathe His spirit in every place.

“God make my life a little flower,
That giveth joy to all”

by its purity and sweetness.

IV

But the hymn distinctly says “a *little* flower,” so I have brought with me some little flowers. Can you see them? Yes. They *are* daisies, “wee, modest, crimson-tippèd flowers.” They are very small and very common. Yet everybody loves the little daisy. It is such a wise little flower. It does not try to grow alone. Daisies grow in heaps and clusters. That is their only chance to be seen. One daisy in a field would be quite lost. But when they come in troops and armies they make the great fields beautiful with their presence. Well, that is

the *safest* thing for all of us. We too are small and weak. Let us keep as near to as many good people as we can. Let us join in all the good we can. Let us be part of some daisy-chain in which God weaves a lot of little lives till they become great and strong for His work. The Band of Hope, the Christian Endeavour, the Sunday School, the Church, are just so many daisy-chains in which people, who if they tried to stand alone could do little or nothing, are able to do great things by giving themselves to other people.

Then the daisy is such a *careful* flower. You know it goes to sleep at sunset, don't you? It closes its pretty petals over its yellow face and sleeps through the night. Why? Because the honey is in the yellow. There is only a little, a very little, honey in a daisy. It *has* to be careful not to lose it. So when the sun sets and the bees go home the daisy closes the shutters and locks up till the morning brings sun and bees again.

Oh, you elder lads and lasses, who have been taught in our schools and are getting ready to go out into the world, I beg this one thing of you, take care of whatever goodness you have received from your early training. Do not let your faith in God, your love for Christ, your habit of prayer, your Bible-reading, your Sunday worship, be all taken from you. Others have taken much pains to give you those habits and feelings. Now they are in your own keeping. Take a little trouble to keep them. The daisy guards its honied crown. See *you* to it that no man take your crown. When

Paul was an old man he said, "I have kept the faith." May you be able to say when you are old, "We too have kept the faith."

God make your lives fair as His flowers, sweet as His roses, pure as His lilies, wise and hardy as His little daisies. The beauty of the Lord your God be upon you!

V

GOD'S POEMS

"God make my life a little song,
That comforteth the sad ;
That helpeth others to be strong,
And makes the singer glad."

I

THERE is a tune in all things. The rain falls to music. One drop chords with another. The wind has its song. The trees of the field clap their hands to the singing of the birds. The bees hum tunes of their own as they flit from one flower to another. The crickets and grasshoppers chirp merrily all day. The little stream sings as it glides down the mountain-side or winds along through dark moors on its way to the sea. The world is full of singing, and these simple songs of nature help to make life bright and cheerful for us all.

The Bible, too, is full of little songs. If you get a Revised Version and turn over the leaves quickly you will be surprised to see how many little songs are scattered all over the book.

Perhaps you have heard people talk of music as an "accomplishment," meaning by that big word

that to be able to sing and play is not really necessary nor even useful, like reading and writing, but a mere ornament of education, something to show off a child's cleverness, but of no more use in real life than the vases and knick-knacks people put in their drawing-rooms and parlours.

But we could not get on at all without singing. Soldiers must have stirring music to march and fight. The baby must have its lullaby. "Play something," says the tired man, and the sick love to be sung asleep.

"The song that stirs a nation's heart
Is in itself a deed."

When all is known, it will be seen that poets have done more of the work of the world than anyone else.

Who can say how much comfort and pleasure "Home, sweet Home" has given? or how much courage "John Brown's body lies mouldering in the grave" put into American soldiers fighting to free the slaves? or how many hearts have been made tender and kind by "Auld Lang Syne"? And I am sure that only God Himself knows how many have been comforted by *The Lord is my Shepherd*. We could do better without trains and steamers than without the "little songs" that comfort and strengthen men's hearts.

II

But our hymn prays for power not only to sing nor even to make, but to *be* a song. "God make my life a little song."

Perhaps you will remember that there is a verse

in the Epistle to the Ephesians which says, "We are His workmanship."

Now the word St. Paul used there is "poems." "We are His poems." We call the poems of Tennyson his works, do we not? Well, the apostle calls good people the "poems" of God. They are a living music. They show the mind and heart of God.

Charles Kingsley had the same thought when he wrote these lines in a little girl's album—

"Be good, sweet maid, and let who will be clever,
Do noble deeds, not dream them, all day long;
And so make life, death, and that vast Forever,
One grand, sweet song."

He wanted her to become one of God's poems, just as Miss Edwards in her hymn wants all the children that sing her verses to become living songs, poems carrying comfort, strength, and gladness to all who know them.

III

Children should be *songs of comfort to their parents*. Many fathers and mothers have much to sadden them. Death, perhaps, has robbed them of those they loved and who loved them very dearly. And they feel more and more lonely in the world. Or perhaps they have a hard struggle to keep the home going. Or perhaps they are ill and weak. But a loving, cheerful, good child is music in the house. A thoughtful, kind boy fills his mother's heart with a glad pride, makes her forget her troubles. Watching his progress at school, noting the prizes he brings home, reading the good reports

he gets, the father's heart overflows with joy. He thanks God for giving him such a son. The wise, modest, unselfish girl that tries by little nameless acts of thoughtful kindness to lighten the burden of life for her father and mother is indeed a living poem—a poem of God—and happy is the home that has her.

IV

I have a little group of figures that I picked up somewhere which has often given me pleasure to look at. One is the figure of a man with a burden on his shoulders. He has come a long way, and he looks tired. But running before him and looking back at him over his shoulder is a little boy with a tambourine in his hand cheering the man on.

And though he is tired there is a smile on his lips, and one feels sure that he will go on to the end of his journey, for he marches to the best of all music, that of a little poem of God,

“That helpeth others to be strong,
And makes the singer glad.”

Now let us all ask God to make us such living songs of comfort and help. Let us try to get rid of bad and sullen tempers. Let us model ourselves on Jesus Christ, so that our lives may have the charm of music in them. Let us do away with all jars and discords, all unkind and ugly ways of speaking and acting. Let us aim at beautiful lives, or, as St. Peter puts it, let us “grow in the grace” (which means the beautiful goodness) “of our Lord Jesus Christ.”

VI

A LITTLE STAFF

“God make my life a little staff,
Whereon the weak may rest ;
That so what health and strength I have,
May serve my neighbours best.”

I

THAT is a rather curious prayer, is it not? What can it really mean? Well, very often when you enter a house you see standing in the hall a number of canes and walking-sticks. Some are light and slender, some are stout and strong. Some are pretty, with collars of silver and gold ; others plain and homely. Here is one that looks very new. It has been very little used. But here is an old staff. See how smooth the handle is, and its iron shoe has worn thin with long service. Most people like to carry something in their hands when they go walking. A staff is company. But to the weak and elderly it is something more. It is a friend and a helper. It is such a friend that everyone can have and everyone can use. It is quite simple. It needs no learning. A bicycle costs a good deal of money and it takes a good

deal of learning to ride. The motor cars run along very quickly—rather too quickly. But they are expensive to buy and difficult to manage. Poor people cannot buy, old and sickly people cannot use them. A man told me that he had to think of *eleven* things before he could set his motor car going. But a staff is cheap and simple. It is everybody's friend, from the little boy of four, who makes believe that it is a horse and pretends that he is riding it to hounds or to battle, down to the old man that makes it carry half his weight as he walks slowly along, and the blind man that feels his way with it through the crowded street, and the sick man that has it by his bedside to tap on the floor or the wall when anything is wanted. What a fine servant-of-all-work the old staff is! Ready for a romp with the children, ready for a climb up the mountain with the young man, ready on Sunday to walk slowly to church with the old man or woman, ready, too, when death comes to the house, taking the one, to help the other on the sad path that leads to the graveside. If the old staff could talk it would have strange stories to tell of joy and sorrow, life and death.

II

Well, now, let us go back to our hymn, "God make my life a little staff."

We are not alone in the world. We are tied to other people. Many of those we know want help. All need help of some kind at some time or other. They want company, for one thing. Jesus, though

He was so strong, wanted people to be with Him. On that great night before He died, when His heart was breaking with sorrow, He wanted to feel that He had some friends left. They could not do much for Him. But they could do something by just being *with* Him and showing that they *cared* and that they loved Him. He wanted a "little staff."

To be sociable and cheerful is in itself to help people. When you snuggle up in an easy-chair and bury your face in a book, leaving baby to mope by himself, what are you? A little hedgehog in its bag of prickles, a little dog snarling over a bone—anything but a little staff whereon the weak may lean.

Then again, to help people we must be simple and humble. Some children are like those puzzle-boxes which are useful enough if one could only open them. They are easy to open once you know the trick. But till you find that out they are of no use. Well, have you ever known a boy like that?

He was a good fellow enough if you only knew how to take him. The worst of it was that it took a good deal of learning. And you never could be sure of him. He had his moods. He was not ready for use at a moment's notice like a staff. He was more like a motor car that goes wrong just when you want to start.

But how simple Jesus was! How ready He was at all times. He was everybody's Friend. He did great things that no one else could. He did little

things that no one else would do. He raised Lazarus from the grave, and within a week He took a basin of water, girded Himself with a towel, and kneeling at His own disciples' feet, washed away the dust and wiped them as though they were His children and He their mother. Oh, children, this prayer, "Make my life a little staff," means, "Make me simple and humble like Jesus."

Yes! and *faithful*. I like that nice new cane with its pretty collar of gold or silver. But if I had a long journey before me I would prefer as my companion that plain, honest, strong staff, that looks as though he had been everywhere and is good to go anywhere. One feels safe with him.

Judas was a clever man, no doubt, but he failed the Master when the road was roughest. He was not true. He betrayed Jesus. Ah, children, that is a terrible thing! Never betray anyone. Be true to all. There is *no* good of any sort possible without truth. If you give your word, keep faith. Pray God to make you a staff whereon the weak may *rest*. "A good man and true" is the highest praise. Try to deserve it. I think there is nothing that gives one such pain as to remember any occasion when one has played false. Judas sold Jesus for money. He got all the money he had bargained for. But it gave him no pleasure. It burned like fire. The thought that he had been false was so awful to him that he killed himself. Keep *tryst*, then. When Paul the apostle was an old man he had much to sadden him, but one thing gave him

joy. He could say, "I have kept the faith." Jesus had leaned on him. *Many* had leaned heavily on him, and he had never broken under anyone. He had been a good man and *true*. God give us all the same good grace!

VII

A LITTLE HYMN

“God make my life a little hymn
Of tenderness and praise ;
Of faith—that never waxes dim
In all His wondrous ways.”

LIGHT is for all who see, flowers for all who love beautiful things. One little song gives pleasure to millions. The staff is for the weak, but a hymn is for God. Well, this little hymn, which has taught us to pray Him to make us of use to all sorts of people in all sorts of ways, now ends by asking Him to let us be something to God Himself. “God make my life a little hymn.”

I

But what is a hymn? A hymn is a song of praise, of beautiful and tender praise. It is easy to understand and remember. It takes hold on men. It clings to them. They somehow know it without learning, and often without knowing that they know. One night during the great American war the sick and wounded soldiers of both armies

were lying on the field after a day of terrible fighting. Many were in great pain. Some were groaning, some were dying. All were sad.

Presently the stars came out and shone as brightly and cheerfully as if no one were wounded or dying. Then one of the soldiers—his son told me the story—began to sing a little hymn—

“When I can read my title clear
To mansions in the skies.”

In a moment all within reach of the voice were listening hard. The next moment they were singing too. Very soon the whole field was singing. Friend and foe joined in the old hymn they had learned in childhood, and perhaps forgotten that they ever knew it. But it had clung to them because it was simple, because it was beautiful, because it brought beautiful thoughts about God home to them.

Well, but how can anyone's life be like a hymn? Surely by being simply and sweetly good. Not merely good. Not just scraping through. The hymn-lives are those which are strikingly and beautifully good.

It is the beautiful picture that praises the painter. The scholar that takes honours is the school's boast. A master may say nice, kind things about his gardener; but the gardener's best praise is to be found in the flowers and fruit he raises. If the garden is beautiful he needs no other praise. Well, what did Jesus say? “Herein is My Father glorified, that ye bear *much* fruit.” All goodness is so much

to the good, but it is only beautiful goodness that becomes a hymn of praise.

II

But the stars that shone above the field of battle, they were beautiful? Yes! You remember the psalm, "The heavens declare the glory of God." And you would do well to learn by heart Addison's lines—

"What though in solemn silence all
Move round this dark terrestrial ball?
In reason's ear they all rejoice,
And utter forth a glorious voice;
For ever singing as they shine,
'The hand that made us is Divine.'"

A sky full of stars is a noble sight, but the little hymn did more for God and men that night than all the stars. It helped God to show Himself to those poor wounded fellows because it was not only beautiful but *tender*. It had a note of love and home in it. It helped to ease their pain a little. It made death itself less hard, for it helped them to believe and to hope in God.

You have heard of Thomas Guthrie, the great Scotch preacher. He was a strong, big man, but when he was dying he asked his friends to sing a hymn, "a bairn's hymn,"—that is, a little child's hymn,—because I suppose he felt that a little simple, tender hymn would best show him the great, deep mother-love of God.

Once during the American war of which I told you just now, some soldiers of the South came

suddenly on a little party of Northern soldiers. These had no idea that the enemy was near, and they were singing one of their favourite hymns, "Jesus, Lover of my soul." You all know it, don't you? Meanwhile the enemy had silently surrounded them and was preparing to fire. But somehow, line after line of the old hymn fell on their ears, and when the lines—

"All my trust on Thee is stayed,
All my help from Thee I bring;
Cover my defenceless head
With the shadow of Thy Wing,"

were sung, the leader said, "Boys, we *can't* fire on that Wing," and the party silently drew away. The hymn by its tenderness had done that for God. It had made these men see the Wing of His Love spread over His people.

Well, may God give us the goodness of love. Love only tells. Only love touches the heart. Love helps men to feel that God is real. Many who hear and read about God do not feel that He is real. They would not sin as they do if they really believed in God. Let us try to help them. Let us help *Him* to show Himself to them. God help us to lives of beautiful goodness, of beautiful patience, tender, true, and beautiful trust, at all times. God Himself has pleasure in such lives. Many people give Him pain just as a wicked child pains his father. But every good life is a joy to God, to others, and to itself.

VIII

COMING TO JESUS

“Jesus said, Suffer” (or let) “the children come unto Me.”—
MATTHEW xix. 14.

NOW, how can little children—indeed, how can anyone—come to Jesus Christ? There is no one else that we should all like to see so much as Jesus Christ. There are many people about whom we have read; we should like to see them; but there is no one that we should so much like to see to-day, or any other day, as Jesus Christ. But how? Where shall we go to come near to Christ? We take a ticket to Liverpool Street, and go to St. Paul's Cathedral, and stand by the grave of Nelson, or stand by the grave of the Duke of Wellington. Of course to stand by a man's grave is not like going to his house when he is alive—still, it is something. A great many people come to St. Paul's in order that they may stand by the grave; and all the while they stand there they say, “Down here lies the body of the great Nelson or the great Wellington.” And so in this way they feel that they have come a little bit nearer to those great men. But if we were to take the train, and after the train the camels, and

go to the very town where He died, and were to ask people, "Will you tell us where the grave of Jesus is—where He lies buried?" they would say, "Jesus does not lie buried here." We might go to the spot where people put Him once as a dead body, but He is not there: Jesus is not even in His grave. You could not stand by the grave and feel that down there lies the body of Jesus. He has not been in His grave for two thousand years. That is the meaning of this Sunday. It comes week after week all over the world; and the meaning of its coming is this—to tell people everywhere that Jesus is not in His grave, Jesus has risen.

Well, then, how can we come to Jesus? He says, "Come." He says, "Let the little children come to Me." It must be that this coming, then, does not mean a coming on foot, does not mean a coming with the body at all, a moving from place to place. It means a coming with the mind; it means a coming with love, with the heart.

Now I think that coming to Jesus means four things. Coming to Jesus means learning about Him. If you care to read this text when you get home, you will see at the beginning that mothers brought their little ones to Jesus Christ. Well, mothers bring their little ones now. How does a mother bring her little one to Christ? Why, when she begins to tell him about Jesus; tell him about His birth at Christmas; tell him about His boyhood; tell him about the sermons He preached, and the great deeds He did; and then at last tell him

about the wonderful death. And in all that she tells her little child she is bringing the child to Jesus ; and in all that you read about Him you are coming nearer to Him. You know there is no finer way of riding or sailing about the world than in a book. A book is a beautiful carriage. You can roam about the world in a book of travels, and you have no expense, no dust, no night, no day ; it does not matter what weather it is, a book is a beautiful carriage. And for some of us who are not at all good sailors there is no better way of sailing, no safer sailing, than in a book.

I sailed last week in a newspaper. Do you know where I went ? I went right up close to the North Pole—went through ice and snow. Just took a ticket, paid a penny, to the North Pole—return ticket one penny. And I had a fine time, and there were thousands of other people who had taken a ticket to the North Pole and back for a penny, simply by reading about another who had gone, not in a newspaper, but in a real ship, and walked hundreds of miles in snow-shoes ; but we go to the North Pole and back with him simply by getting on board his book or getting on board his paper. Now there is no ship in the world and no carriage in the world in which you can travel to such wonderful places as you travel in the Bible. Take the New Testament, and you can sail right away to where Jesus lived, and you can come up quite close to Him, and the oftener you do that the more you will be coming to Him, by knowing more and more about Him.

Then again, coming to Jesus means loving Jesus, means trusting Him, believing and doing what He says. To read and to know about Jesus will bring you a little nearer to Him, but if you do what He tells you, you will then have the feeling, not only that you have come to Him, but you will somehow have the feeling that He has come quite close to you, just as a soldier has the feeling that, in obeying orders, the general is brought nearer to him. If he disobeyed, he would feel as if the captain or the general were far from him. So if you try to do what Christ told you, try to keep His commandments, then, without thinking of it, you will feel that the commandment has carried you so much nearer to Jesus Christ.

Then again, coming to Jesus means helping Jesus in His own work. He said to the people one day, "Come unto Me and take My yoke upon you"—that is, "Come and do My work; help Me in My work."

You know that Jesus began life as a carpenter. Have you sometimes thought you would like to play in the carpenter's shop at Nazareth? Boys in the country, and in small country villages, like very much to go into the smith's shop and play at the great hammers, hammering away at the iron on the anvils, but they like still more, I think, to go into the carpenter's shop, and to whittle bits of wood and drive old nails with big hammers through other bits of wood. And a great many boys become carpenters because they have been helping in a carpenter's shop.

There is no carpenter's shop in all the world that any boy or girl would so wish to play in as in the carpenter's shop at Nazareth. When He was looking for a hammer, how proudly a boy would find it and bring it to Christ; when He was looking for a saw, how glad would a boy be to find it and bring it to Christ.

Well, Jesus is still working, though not as a carpenter, and He has a great work. He wants a lot of helpers. This world is His workshop; London is a bit of His workshop. The whole earth is His workshop, where He is doing His work, and if you want to help Him, come to His workshop, find things He has lost, come and bring the things He wants, come and do any little thing that can be done; make His work easier, and you will *come to Him*.

Then, in the last place, coming to Jesus means praying, means asking Him to help you.

A great many people come to Him in that way. Some parents came to Him with their children; some people came to Him with their own sickness. Such a lot of people used to come to ask Jesus to help them; nobody ever came to ask Jesus in vain. That was the curious thing. Nobody ever came to ask Jesus to help him that Jesus did not do it—because He did all sorts of things. It is very wonderful, He could not simply do one thing, but He could do everything. You know what the people said about Him. They said this: "He hath done all things well." Now there was no one else about whom they could say that. There are some men if you hear

them play a piano or violin you never forget it—it is something wonderful—but if you asked those men to get up and make a speech, or ride a horse, or row a boat, they could not do it. Oh, no, no! Some people can only do one thing well, but Jesus does all things well. There are many stories told about when Jesus was a carpenter, how men brought things for Him to mend, and there was no one who could mend the broken things as the Carpenter of Nazareth could. Well, it is true. There are things that can be broken in our lives that no one can mend but Jesus Christ.

There are many things which I hope you children won't know yet a while. Hearts get broken sometimes. A man's spirit gets broken so that he loses power and becomes limp; he is like a bruised willow, he cannot stand upright. There is no one can mend a man like that as the Carpenter of Nazareth can. So when you break your resolutions and vows, when you feel weak and have difficulties in your life, come—that is, pray—ask Him to mend the broken things in your life, and He will not send you away, and by and by you too will say about Him, "He hath done all things well."

Now in this way we may all come to Jesus, even the very smallest. The youngest child may begin to learn about Him; the youngest child may begin to obey Him; the youngest child may begin to help Him; the youngest child may begin to pray to Him. And then, after we have been coming to Him all our lives, at last will come the best of all

the comings, when we shall go through the great gate of death, right into the land where He is, and we shall see Him as He is, and be with Him where He is.

May God help you, dear children, to come to Jesus Christ.

IX

BLOCKING THE WAY

“Then were there brought unto Him little children, that He should lay His hands on them, and pray : and the disciples rebuked them.”—
MATTHEW xix. 13.

I WANT this morning to speak about blocking the way to Jesus. Little ones were on their way to Jesus Christ. Their mothers were willing that they should come to Him; indeed, they wanted them to come to Him; and they wanted Christ to speak to the children. But while these little children were on their way, cheerfully and gladly, to Jesus Christ, some grown-up men blocked the way, and said, “No, go back; you must not come.” And were it not that Jesus Himself ordered these men to get out of the way, to clear the path, these little children would have been stopped altogether.

Now, do children ever do for each other what these grown-up men tried to do for these children? Do children ever hinder goodness in other children? I think they do; I am sure they do. So I want you to think about two things. First: How the way was blocked. Secondly: How the way was cleared.

I

First of all: How the way to Jesus Christ was blocked. Of course, in the text, it was by means of these grown-up men sending the mothers and the children away. But how may children block the way for other children to come to Christ?

Well, there are many ways. If you set a bad example in the house, for instance. Example goes from higher to lower. You elder boys, you elder girls, the little ones look to you; they think a lot of you; they think more of you than they like to admit. They do not like to say how much they think of you; but they do think a good deal, and they copy you; and if you set up a bad example, you are just blocking the way for younger children to be good.

Then again, it is sometimes done by tempting children to do evil. Some boys seem to think it great fun to tempt smaller boys, to say what ought not to be said, to do what ought not to be done. Well, when a boy does that, he is blocking the way to Jesus Christ.

Then you may do it by being a hypocrite. You know what a hypocrite is? It means a child who pretends to be a good child, and is not one. Now if a child pretends to be very good, reads the Bible every day, so that everybody in the house can see that he reads it, and takes upon him altogether to be a thoroughly good boy, and yet, after the Bible-reading is over, is not good, is not nice, is not kind, but is unkind, what the children call nasty or mean, well, he is a little hypocrite, and he disgusts the other

children with goodness ; and so by his hypocrisy he is blocking the way to Jesus. But I think it is most generally done by making fun of holy things, by sneering at goodness.

Do you know, boys and girls, the highest thing in this country, or any country, is what is called public opinion, the opinion of the people as a whole. Well, there is a public opinion among children, and public opinion among children is a very strong thing. I know schools where children are persecuted because they go to chapel and not to church ; and they have got to bear up against public opinion, and some of the weaker ones give way, and are driven out of what they know to be right. I have known schools where boys who prayed were laughed at ; if a lad read the Bible he was sneered at. That is in some degree what people used to do at Smithfield. They used to take a man and dress him up in a fool's cap and all kinds of grotesque things. Of course people laughed at him when they saw him as he went along. Then they ended up by burning him alive. That is what we call persecution. Well, whenever you, being a larger boy, laugh at a little boy for saying his prayers or reading his Bible, you are persecuting him and blocking the way to Jesus Christ, and committing a very, very great sin against God.

The second thing is this : How the way to Jesus was cleared.

It was cleared at two ends. You know that in a colliery sometimes a great mass of earth falls down, so that the people working in the colliery are

blocked in and cannot get out. Then people go down to rescue them. Do you know how they rescue them? The people who go down work at one end, and the other people work at the other end, until by and by the pickaxes of both parties meet, and then they send up a cheer. They know then that the two parties have met, and the block is cleared.

So Jesus worked at one end, He told the disciples to get out of the way, and the children worked at the other end. They still wanted to come, and so the way was made clear.

Now remember that. No one can really stop you from being good if you only want to be so; because if you work at the block at one end, Jesus will be working at the other end, and you will be bound to meet. No one will or can stop you on your way to Christ if you really want to go to Him. Because, after all, if you think of it, the sneers of others will break no bones, and in their heart of hearts they will be bound to respect you if you keep on your way. That will help you very much. Of course, it is not nice to have to bear the sneers of people, or the sneers of other children; but you can keep on your way, and instead of being sneered at you will be cheered, because down in the bottom of his heart, and down in the bottom of her heart, every boy and girl is simply bound to respect goodness. They cannot help it. God made them so. Children, be brave, then, for goodness. Be brave for God. Don't listen to those that sneer. Don't think of them: think of Christ. He will cheer you. Work

on, and on and on, true to the very end ; for Jesus Christ thus said, " Be thou faithful unto death and I will give thee the crown of life," and the crown will pay for every jeer and every sneer you have borne. So, however the way may be blocked, if you are only steady and stick to it, the way will be cleared, and, like those children, you will come face to face with Christ.

X

THE ALMOND TREE

“What seest thou? And I said, I see a rod of an almond tree.”—
JEREMIAH i. 11.

THIS, that I hold in my hand, is a bit from an almond tree. I wish I had a better spray, so that all the children might see it, but you all know it. It makes a very beautiful sight in the London streets at this time—the almond tree in blossom.

The meaning of the word almond tree in the language in which the Bible was written is the *awakener*. It was the tree that blossomed first in the Jewish spring, just as it is the tree that blossoms first with us. And the Jews used to think, in a rather pretty way, that in the dismal winter all the trees went to sleep, as we say that at nightfall the flowers go to sleep, and then, in the early spring, which was like the morning of the year, the almond tree was the first to open its eyes, to wake and look round it, and when they saw the waking tree they knew that the dawn of the year had come. They were very glad because the winter was gone, and they knew that the time for flowers, and the singing of birds, and all pleasant things, would soon be

with them. So there was no tree in all their land which they loved more than the almond tree.

Well, Jeremiah, who became one of the greatest prophets that ever lived, when he was a very young man—some say when he was even a lad of fourteen—had a vision. He saw something break into blossom before him, and he heard God asking him, "What do you see?" And he looked again, and, lo, what was it but a branch of the waking tree; and then he knew that his time had come, his time to awake to the work of his life, because the almond tree—the sign of the awakening—had been given to him.

Well, now, boys and girls, have not you seen the sign of the almond tree breaking into blossom in your own life? You ask me, what do I mean? Why, I mean this: at first a child is expected to do nothing, but just to play and sleep, and eat and drink, and to be as quiet as it conveniently can be. Very often it does not find it convenient to be quiet, but that is about all that people expect of children for a time. Then they are expected to begin learning lessons, little tiny wee lessons; then their lessons get a little harder, harder and harder; and by and by people say, when they come to the house, "Dear me, how this boy has grown!" or "Dear me, how this girl is running up!" Then they begin to ask questions, "What is the boy going to be?" "What are you going to make of this boy?" and so forth. You have heard such questions. Now all this means that the almond tree is beginning to blossom for you; it means that you have come to the time when

people feel that you ought to wake up and take your life in earnest. The time of lesson-learning is slipping by; life has quickened its pace, and you have come to the point when people expect you to see the rod of the almond tree, and to settle what you are going to do. And not only so, but God too expects a boy and girl coming on to twelve or fourteen to settle what kind of life they are going to live.

Now, have you thought of that? You have read a great many good books, and heard a great many pieces of very good advice. You have been prayed for over and over again. Fathers and mothers and teachers and others who love you, they are beginning to think it is time that you saw the almond tree break into blossom, and that you woke up and settled what kind of man or woman you are going to be.

Then another thing. The Jews loved the almond tree because it was the beginning of things still more beautiful. They knew that after the spring would come the summer, and after the summer the lovely autumn; fruit and flower would come now the almond tree had come.

Well, that is exactly what life ought to be. What a lovely spring is to a lovely summer, so the prettiness of childhood ought to be to the greater beauties of manhood and womanhood. It would be a poor year that had nothing but a spring—a cold, dreary, wet, fruitless summer—a dank, moist, misty autumn—it would be a miserable kind of year with only the almond tree. And so that life is a miserable life that has not had anything pretty about it but

the innocence of childhood. Boyhood and girlhood ought to give people joy, because they see in them the promise of a long series of things yet more beautiful than the almond tree of youth.

But the Jews loved the almond tree, too, because they thought it woke other trees up. You know it is not the loveliest of all the blossoms, but it wakes up trees more beautiful than itself. It wakes up the rose, the queen of all the flowers, and all the lovely things of the garden and field. Well, we too may do that—we may wake up beautiful things in the lives of others, and help to make lives far more beautiful than our own.

There is a story told of a sculptor in Florence, who, working all by himself, not letting anyone see what he was doing, made a statue of St. George, and when he showed it to his master it was so lifelike that the master stood in front of it and looked at it from head to foot, and said to it, "Now, march!" But it could not march; it was lifelike, but it could not walk. But you and I may do more than the sculptor did. We may wake up things in the souls of other people that will actually live and march. If you read the history of good men and women—and there is no better reading than such history—you will find that most great people have been awakened by a word, said, very often, by extremely humble people. Many quiet, humble men, like the almond tree, have called into action lives far greater than their own. We may try to do that—try to wake up beautiful thoughts and resolutions in others.

And then there is one last word. The Jews still

carry branches of the almond tree with them to their synagogues, in the hope that the time will come when God will restore them to their own land. But I think we have a far better reason for loving the almond tree. Some say all beautiful things die. The year ends in dreary winter. The lives even of good men and women and little children all end in death; they all go to sleep after their waking—they sleep in silent cemeteries and graveyards, and know no waking. Everything goes to sleep, men say. Ah, no, that is not all. I see above the cemeteries and graves of the world the rod of an almond tree, for there is One that has awakened from the sleep of death. The almond tree stands for Jesus Christ. He went to sleep, but He woke—woke early as the almond tree wakes; and He who was the first to wake from death, will, in time, wake all that die in Him. Jesus Christ is the resurrection and the life; He is the first-fruits of them that are asleep; He gives His people sleep when they are tired; and He will not forget to wake them, when the time comes, to the blissful land of eternal summer.

And so you see the almond tree, which the Jews loved so long ago, is worthy to be loved and cherished by us too, for the blessings and hopes which mingle with its beautiful blossoms.

XI

GROWING UP

“And the child grew, and waxed strong, filled with wisdom : and the grace of God was upon him.”—LUKE ii. 40.

“AND the child grew.” There is nothing more wonderful than growth. Spring and summer are the times when things grow everywhere ; by the roadside, in the field, in the forest, in the garden, and on the window-sills of London homes. Everywhere things are growing, we can almost see them growing, yet there is not a man in all the world to-day, however clever he may be at explaining things, who can tell us how things grow. God shows you all His miracles, but He never tells you how He does them. The plainest things, too, are still as wonderful as they ever were, and there is nothing more wonderful in all the world than growth.

Now there are three kinds of growth.

Let us take a little baby as our instance. First of all the baby begins to grow in body ; it gets bigger, it gets stronger ; it has power over its little actions ; it begins to walk—it is a great time in the house when the baby begins to walk—and every-

body says how it is growing. And so it goes on, growing in bulk and in strength. Its clothes get too small for it. It grows on to boyhood or to girlhood; on to manhood, to womanhood; to strength and grace and beauty.

Now that is a marvellous thing—that growth of body. But, by and by, people begin to notice another kind of growth; something else is growing. This little one begins to walk—it also begins to talk, to notice things, to remember, to like and to dislike. Not only is the body growing, the mind is growing too. Presently the little mind will be strong enough to learn the alphabet, to begin to write, to begin to cipher, to begin to play on the piano, to the great terror of everybody; later on it will be strong enough to go to school, to college, and will, in time, become a learned man or woman.

Now that is a still more wonderful growth, for it will stop growing as a body, but it will never stop growing as a mind. You may find that child at eighty still growing, still growing, still learning, still advancing in wisdom. But, once more, if you notice the little one very closely, you will see that, not only does it grow in two ways—in body and mind—but that it grows in another way—it grows out of little faults into little virtues; out of little tricks of temper into patience, into power over itself; out of little selfishnesses into noble love. There are dolls and toys of the mind and there are dolls and toys of the soul; and as the body outgrows its clothes, and the mind outgrows its little mistakes, so there is some-

thing which is the best thing in man—the soul—which also grows; grows out of little faults and little wickednesses, and the unbeautiful habits of selfishness, till, by and by, men see before them a grand and splendid character; not only a strong man in body and a clear man in mind, but a beautiful man in life, and people say of him, “What a noble man he is,” or “What a noble woman she is.”

So you see that the baby we have been talking about has grown in three ways, or, if you like, three different things have grown in it—the body has grown, the mind has grown, and the soul has grown.

II

Well, now, once more, I have said that nobody quite understands the secret of growth. And yet we know something of the way of growth. What is it that makes a living thing grow? Well, there are two things that we must have. Everything that grows must have food and work. Everything that grows must have food. There is nothing that grows in all this world but eats and drinks. Every little bone in your body must have something to eat; every nerve and vein, every little particle of hair on your head, everything that grows must have something to eat. It must live on food, and if you do not give it its own food you starve it, and it will die. This is true also of your minds. The mind can be starved. There are a great many starved minds in London. If you could only see the minds of some people beside their bodies, you would see a big

strong body and by the side of it a little dwarfed, wizened, crippled, starved mind. Oh yes, a great many minds die of starvation.

What is the food, the bread of a mind? The bread of a mind is truth; and if you want your mind to grow, feed it, give it healthy mind-food, good, strong, wholesome truth. Read good books, think pure thoughts, keep the companionship of wise lads and lasses, so that the mind may feed on good things and grow. But remember that a soul can also be starved. The food of the soul is goodness, righteousness, truth, love. There are thousands and hundreds of thousands of souls that die of starvation. They don't grow, they become dwarfed; they become smaller and smaller, and they lose their very life because they have not had anything to eat. Feed your souls on good things, and they will grow.

But then, everything that grows must have exercise, must have work. Too much work will stop growth. Too much work takes the strength out of a boy or a man, but work puts strength into him as well.

Have you noticed a nest of birds when it is full of little ones? Well, the mother-bird has to get food for the little ones. But by and by there is something else needed; the little things must themselves begin to practise flight. You know what an eagle is. When an eagle thinks the eaglets have had enough food and not had enough work, and they begin to get lazy, do you know what he does? He breaks up the nest and tosses the young ones out, as if he said, "Try your own wings."

Well, if it is to grow, the mind too must work. When you are bothered by a problem in algebra, you say, "Oh, what will be the good of all this to me?" I will tell you. You will forget the sum in algebra, but by exercising your mind on it the mind will grow stronger. That is the good of it.

And so with regard to holiness. Does any boy or girl here ask, "How shall I become a good man or a good woman? I will tell you. Practise doing good things; that is the only way. By doing bad things a man becomes bad. By going on doing good things he becomes good.

So, boys and girls, think of these three kinds of growth. Think of growing bodily. Hold your body sacred as the temple of the Holy Ghost. Think of growing in mind, and think of growing beautiful in character. Practise doing good things; and then, like John in the house of Zacharias, like Jesus in the house of Mary, your fathers and mothers will have something of the joy that their fathers and mothers had, in seeing their children growing—as they see you grow in strength, in wisdom, and goodness. Fathers and mothers and teachers are not quite so unreasonable as some of you think sometimes. We do not expect our boys and girls to be perfect at once. The one thing that we all do ask and pray for is that the children should grow, should become better and better, should grow in body and strength of mind and beauty of soul.

May God bless you and keep you, and help you so to grow, for His name's sake. Amen.

XII

RAIN AND SNOW

“For as the rain cometh down, and the snow from heaven, and returneth not thither, but watereth the earth, and maketh it bring forth and bud, that it may give seed to the sower, and bread to the eater.”—ISAIAH lv. 10.

I

WE have had a good deal of snow and a great deal of rain lately. Do you sometimes think what becomes of all the rain and the snow? Have you ever heard people say that something they were looking for must have gone where last year's snow went? I have often heard that said. It means, of course, that something is lost—hopelessly lost like last year's rain and snow. But that is not a very wise saying. It is not true. The snow is not lost. God never loses or wastes anything. Not one feathery snowflake, not a single one of all the million million drops of rain that fall is ever lost. True, they pass out of sight. But that is because they have work to do elsewhere. We only see them on their way to the roots of things. Their business is with the roots and seeds that lie underground. Once, when a lady was travelling in the Holy Land

a heavy shower of rain fell. Of course she did not like it. She wanted fine weather, to travel about and see the country. But her guide threw a cloak over her, and said, "May God protect you while He is blessing the corn." She had quite forgotten that God has other things to think about and care for besides men and women. He had the corn to water for one thing. This lady said that she never grumbled at the rain after that. If it crossed her plans for the day, she was willing to stand aside and let God bless the corn.

So although the snow has already gone from your sight, and you cannot find enough to make one little snowball in all your garden, yet it is not lost. It is at work. You know where to look for it. By and by it will come up in greener grass, in sweeter flowers; for, as the text says, "the rain cometh down and the snow from heaven, and returneth not thither, but watereth the earth, and maketh it bring forth and bud." You'll find the lost snowballs growing by and by in the rosebuds, and the raindrops hanging on the plum trees and gooseberry bushes.

II

Well, there are other things that seem to be wholly lost like rain and snow, yet are not really lost. A boy forgets the sums he works, yet bit by bit he learns arithmetic, never to forget it while he lives. He does not remember the dictation lessons, but little by little he learns to spell. The examples in grammar melt, like snow, still the lad learns to

speak and write English correctly. Most likely in ten years he will have forgotten most of the Euclid he ever did, but his mind will be all the stronger and clearer because he once learnt all about angles and circles. These things, though forgotten, are not wasted. They help to educate and strengthen the mind.

The real test of a scholar is not, can he repeat the rules of his grammar-book? but, can he speak the language? Not, can he do the sums in the school-book? but, can he keep accounts in the office?

III

That, too, is God's test for us. "So shall My Word be," saith the Lord. The Bible should be to us what snow and rain are to our gardens and fields. It is a good thing, a very good thing, to learn as much as ever we can of the Bible by heart—for then we shall always have a little Bible within us. But even if we could commit the *whole* of it to memory, and were able to say it off by heart, from end to end without a single mistake, unless it did for us what the rain does for the flower bed—that is, unless it made good things and beautiful things grow in our lives—it would be of no real use to us. If a boy or girl gets a proposition in Euclid by heart, simply learning the letters as they stand in the book, but without taking the trouble to understand, it will be of no use whatever; and should the master change the letters or put figures instead of letters, the scholar is at once put to shame. So if we learn all

about Jesus Christ's life, it does us no real good unless it makes us want to be like Him. If you "cram" up for a Scripture examination, if you get a lot of Bible facts into your head, it may win a few marks for you; but unless the Bible sinks into your mind, and makes you more patient, more humble, braver and sweeter-tempered, it does not do you any real, lasting good. The child that knows less than you, who has not a head for dates and names, who cannot fill examination papers as you can, but who knows that the chief meaning of the Bible is goodness, and who therefore tries to be a good, brave, honest, loving child, stands higher far in God's sight than the cleverest child who only knows, but doesn't try.

I like to watch the rain coming down from heaven, but I like flowers and waving corn still better. The snowflakes are pretty things, but daisies and cowslips are much prettier. Some children like to eat bits of snow, but all the children I know prefer plums and apples. In the same way it is a good thing to store the memory with verses and pretty hymns, but to do God's will, to "bear fruit," as Jesus said, oh! that is much, much better.

XIII

THE GOLDEN PSALM

“I have said unto the Lord, Thou art my Lord: I have no good beyond Thee. As for the saints that are in the earth, they are the excellent in whom is all my delight.”—PSALM xvi. 2, 3.

THIS 16th Psalm is very often called the Golden Psalm. Amongst the other treasures which make it so precious and beautiful are these two verses that I have read to you, in which, if you look at them closely, you will find two great things well and wisely settled.

You know how you feel about your home lessons. If, in your desire for fun, you spend the better part of the afternoon and evening in play, there is in your mind all along a feeling of anxiety, and you don't *quite* enjoy the play. Why? Well, because the chief thing has been left undone; but if you first tackle the lesson, and do the task, then, with a full and free heart you can enjoy your romp or your play, because the chief thing has been done and settled.

Well, now, that is exactly what the man who wrote this Golden Psalm had done; he had settled the big things. Two great things which every man

has to settle are these: who is to be his master in life? and who are to be his companions? And this man had settled both these things. He had settled who was to be his master. Every man must have a master; every man must serve someone; in every life there must be something or someone uppermost. And this man had settled who was to be uppermost. "I have said unto the Lord, *Thou* shalt be *my* Lord." He had settled that.

And then again, he had settled who were to be his companions—the saints, the good people, the best people, the holiest men and women. This man said, "They shall be my companions. I won't be satisfied with anything in the shape of companionship less than the best, lower than the very holiest. I will have the Holy God for my Master; and I will have holy people for my companions. I will belong to them; they shall belong to me. I will live with them, take pleasure in the thought of them; I will stand by that order."

Now these were great things to settle, and because he had settled them well he was able to write his Golden Psalm, to go about the business of life with a free heart, and to feel that in whatever he might fail he had not failed in the greatest things. The great things had been done, the great business of life had been settled.

Well, now, little people, and you young lads and lasses who are growing up from childhood, I want you to believe me when I say that of all the things you will be called upon to settle in this world these

are the two greatest things—Who shall be your master? Who shall be your companions?

Who shall rule you? Some allow their bad temper to rule them. Some little girls grow up to allow vanity, love of dress, love of foolish, silly, cheap, nasty little ornaments to rule them. And some even go on through life ruled by the love of mere tinsel and finery. They say to gold and silver and a few shining stones, "Ye shall be my gods; of these I will think, for these I will live." Others are governed by money. The highest thing in life to them is money; they have no good beyond it. In order to get it, and in order to keep it, they are willing to sacrifice everything.

Now, boys and girls, how will it be with you? To what, or to whom, are you going to say, "Thou shalt be my lord?" Will you say to the God that made you, to the God that loves you, to the God that wants to make life bright and eternity beautiful for you, will you say to Him, "Thou shalt be my Lord"?

And then again, your companions. Shall they be the good or shall they be the bad people? Well, if you keep the companionship of bad boys, or men, or girls, or women, anywhere, whether it be on the street, or in school, or at home, or in books, it simply means that almost to a certainty you will become like the people with whom you live.

The insects in the woods are like the things on which they feed and like the trees in which they lodge. If you keep the company of a bad man or a boy, you will become more and more like him.

Now who are to be your companions? Will you not say, as this man said, "I will have the best; I will delight in brave, pure, true, honest men and women"? Will you say that? and saying it stick to it, settle it, not unsay it—say it to-day and unsay it to-morrow? This man said and settled it; and so he wrote his Golden Psalm. And you also will write your Golden Psalm of life if you choose God for your God and God's people for your people.

Then one thing more. The Golden Psalm, if it is to be written by you at all, must be written when you are young. I think that is beyond doubt. People do not write the Golden Psalm when they are old. If the great things of life are to be settled well and wisely, they must be settled in youth. Abel wrote it when he was young; Enoch when he was young; Moses when he was young; Samuel, David, Jesus Christ, they all wrote the Golden Psalm when they were young; they settled these things at the start. People don't write their Golden Psalm as a rule after thirty. People don't change *much* after twenty-five. They change very little, if at all, after forty. Very few people change then from bad to good, or from good to bad. The thing has been settled.

Life moves very quickly, children. Do not think that you have got a tremendous amount of time. You will be astonished by and by where it has all gone. If you are going to write your Golden Psalm you must write it now; write it in boyhood, girlhood, and in early youth. And whatever else you

may do or fail to do in life, you will be a happy-hearted man or woman if, when the end of life comes, looking over what you have failed to do or failed to get, you will still be able to say, "Well, thank God, I wrote my Golden Psalm. God was my God, and His people were mine."

XIV

A BAD MEMORY

“Yet did not the chief butler remember Joseph, but forgot him.”—
GENESIS xl. 23.

I

STRANGE, was it not, that he should forget Joseph? Joseph of all men. Of course you remember the story. Joseph had been put in prison, and there he met the chief butler of King Pharaoh. One night this butler had a dream which he could not understand at all, and Joseph explained it to him, and told him that very soon he would be taken out of prison and made a great man again in Pharaoh's castle. And it soon came to pass exactly as Joseph had said; and when the chief butler was going out of prison Joseph went to him and begged of him, whenever he had a chance, to do him a good turn, and get him also out of prison, into which he had been so unjustly put. And no doubt the chief butler readily promised to do what he could; but for all that they had been together in prison, for all that Joseph had been so kind to him, “yet did not the chief butler remember Joseph, but forgot him.”

Now I say that was a strange thing, it was what you boys call mean; to walk out of gaol, to go back to his comfortable and honourable place in the castle, and never give one thought to the poor lad who was pining away in prison, and who had no friend to help him but himself. That was mean, was it not? All sins are bad, but some sins are mean as well. A lie, for instance, is not only a sin, it is a mean sin. A theft is not only bad, it is mean also. We not only hate it, but we despise it; and so ingratitude—to be thankless for kindness shown—is not only bad, but it has in it something despicable, something contemptible, something that is loathsome. It was mean in the chief butler to forget Joseph. And yet this forgetfulness, strange as it is, is woefully common. It is wonderful, when we come to think of it, what we remember and what we forget. It is wonderful how our memories retain little things, silly things, worthless things, carrying them with us for years.

A memory is very much like a boy's pocket—at least boys' pockets as they used to be. A boy's pocket used to be a marvellous thing. I daresay it is about the same thing yet—a sort of museum of antiquities—an old curiosity shop—a collection of odds and ends—bits of string, brass tops of nails, the dried skin of an orange, the blackened core of an apple, a pocket-knife with the blades wanting, a top, a couple of marbles, and a chestnut or two, and other things too numerous to name. Such are the treasures, so worthless, yet so precious, that fill up many a boy's pocket. And somehow these

things never get lost. However much he tumbles about, however much he plays, wherever he tosses his clothes when he bathes in the river, these things never get lost; but if he happens to have a bright sixpence in his pocket somewhere, or something that is really useful, why he loses that, of course, at the first chance, and never finds it again, but he keeps the old worthless things as safe as in a bank. And is it not so with our *memories*—those wonderful elastic pockets of the mind? Oh, the trash, the lumber, the dried orange skin, the blackened apple cores that we carry about in our heads, and never lose one of them. While the great and the good and the useful and beautiful things tumble out of the pockets of memory, and are quickly lost for ever! Yes, it is strange the things we remember, and no less strange the things we forget.

II

"The chief butler forgat Joseph." Strange that he should forget Joseph, but whom have you forgotten? Can you throw a stone at this man? Have you not sometimes forgotten father, mother, and home, and death, the judgment, eternity, honesty, truth, purity, God? Have you not forgotten Jesus Christ that died for you? *Yet did the boy forget God.* He promised God that he would remember Him; he promised the home circle that he would keep to the ways of truth and purity. Yet did he not remember, but forgat. Yes. It is wonderful that in a world made by

God, and upheld by God's hand, we manage to forget Him.

Two boys were together once, and one was enticing the other to go and rob an orchard; and he looked to the left, and he said, "There is nobody there"; he looked to the right, and he said, "It is all clear"; he looked in front, there was not a soul to be seen; he looked behind, there was no one there. "I've looked everywhere," he whispered, "and there is no one in sight." But the other said, "No, Jack, you have not looked 'everywhere.' You have not *looked up*." It was a splendid hint. It is no use looking either to the right or to the left, or in front or behind, if you forget to look up; for however clear the coast may be, there is always God watching, always God listening. This *forgetfulness* is an endless evil. Let me tell you one thing, children, which I hope you will remember. It is just this: Your life will depend chiefly on what you remember and on what you forget in times of temptation. If, when you are tempted, the only thing you remember is how fair the fruit looks, how sweet it will be to the taste, and you forget that God has forbidden it, then you will sin; but if, at the moment you are tempted, you remember more clearly than everything else—more clearly than the sweetness of the apple—the forbidding commandment of God, then you will stand.

That is what made Joseph such a fine character—the things he remembered. When he was tempted he always remembered the great things—truth, duty, God. That was what helped Jesus Christ to be so

great—the things He remembered. He too always remembered truth, duty, God. And so He lived the life and died the death which are, and ever will be, the joy and wonder of the world. Do *you* also remember these three—truth, duty, God—and your lives will also become beautiful and strong.

III

But what is the cure for a bad memory? How did this man come to forget Joseph? Well, I take it he was not very serious when he promised to remember him; and again, when he got out; he did not go back on the first visiting day to the prison to see the Jewish boy. If he had kept up his friendship, in fact, if he had *cared*, he would not have forgotten. The reason why we forget is we do not care. You remember everything that you want to remember, everything that you are interested in. If you get interested in a lesson you do not forget it. If a verse of poetry comes singing into my head, I may hear it or see it only once, but if I really like it I have got it for ever. It may not be very good, but I have got it if I love it. But if I don't, then it goes in at one ear and out through the other. And so it is we forget God, because we are not serious about God, because we do not really *care*, because we do not keep up our friendship with Him. And so, if you want not to forget the great things of life, boys and girls, make your morning and evening prayers things of reality; make them more serious; remember that they are the times

when you are to get strength to live. You cannot live without God. Go to Him in the morning, go to Him in the evening, seriously, so that the thought of Him shall grow deeper and deeper and deeper; that the name of God shall be engraved upon your heart; so that at the last, living with Him, living by Him, He shall be *unforgettable*. There are things which we cannot forget. What are they? The things which we think about; the things which we love; the things which we practise. Do try to live in this way, so that right, and truth, and duty shall be unforgettable, and it shall be written of you in the Book of Life, "Yet did he not forget, but remembered God."

May He bless you and keep you, for His name's sake.

XV

WASTED SUNDAYS

“A hearer that forgetteth.”—JAMES i. 25.

JESUS CHRIST sat one day by the seaside, and a crowd of people sat listening to Him. They could never hear enough of what He had to say. But after He had been talking to them for a long while He told them a little story about a farmer who went out to sow seed in a field. As this farmer was sowing, some of the seed fell upon the wayside, and birds came and ate it all up; so of course it came to nothing. Then some of the seed fell into rocky ground, and some among thorn roots, and it soon died there also. But some of it fell into good ground and in time bore fruit. So you see the farmer in this story sowed a good deal of seed that came to nothing at all. But why did Jesus Christ tell such a story as that? Well, He explained what He meant. He told the people that He Himself was like that farmer. The truth He had tried to teach was just like seed. The people were the field in which He was sowing it up and down, but as in the farmer's case, so in His own, a good deal of it would come to nothing at

all. Some of them were listening well and would do good with what He had told them, but others were like the hard-trodden wayside, and what He had told them would soon be forgotten, and they would not be a bit the better for anything they heard.

Well, now, that is what St. James means in this little text. St. James was the brother of Jesus Christ, and he very often says things like Christ. "A hearer that forgetteth" means one who is like a bit of the field into which the farmer has sown good seed and nothing comes of it.

Now, do you not find, with regard to the sermons you hear, the books that you read, the lessons that you receive, that very much seems to come to nothing at all? You forget it entirely. We all must feel so, men and women as well as boys and girls — that we are readers and hearers that often forget. The good seed falls upon our minds, and nothing comes of it.

Now, I would ask, why is it we forget?

I

Well, in the first place, many forget because they do not listen. Some children are the best of all listeners that any preacher can ever have, and some are about the worst. Some don't try.

Sir John Millais, the great painter who died not long ago, painted two pictures of a little girl in church. The first was called "My First Sermon" — the first time she ever came to church. She was a

sweet little thing; she was nicely dressed, but she was prettier than her dress. Her eyes were glued upon the preacher, and I am sure he preached well that morning because he had such a charming little listener: she listened with all her soul. Then he painted a second picture called "My Second Sermon." She was dressed as before, but she did not look half so nice; hands and feet were all awry, her face dull, eyes closed—she was fast asleep. I am very sure that nothing at all came of that sermon. The seed fell on the wayside.

Well, now, that is just how it is with a great many children. Some boys, for instance, do not even trouble to listen. They try *not* to listen, and they succeed. When I see a boy sitting down in his seat with his hands in his pockets, slouching lazily against the corner of the pew, feeling for his knife, gazing vacantly round him, or trying to get a sweet into his mouth to suck, dear little baby that he is, I know that he does not want to listen, and if he can help it he will not listen. Preaching to him is like sowing seed on a hard path—nothing will come of it.

Dear children, there is one thing I would press upon you. It is this—get into the habit of paying attention. You get enough time to sleep at home, plenty of time at home to lean and lounge. Get into the habit of paying attention, and you will be sure of getting something worth attending to, whoever may be talking to you.

There was a boy in the Bible who heard his own name called at midnight. He got up and said,

"Speak, Lord, for Thy servant heareth." His name was Samuel, and you know what a fine man he became. Do you boys and girls, whenever you come to church, come in that spirit, and say within your hearts, "Speak, Lord, for we are listening."

II

Then again, people do not remember because they do not think afterwards of what they have heard or read. To hear is never enough. If you are reading a book, for instance, and you are suddenly called away from your book, in two minutes you have forgotten all that you had been reading about, and what you have to do in order to remember it is to think, to fish it up from the pool of memory, then it comes back to you, and you will not easily forget it again. When you go to be photographed, you know you sit and you look, and the thing is done and then you see the photographer taking the plate into a dark room. You say, "Why cannot I have my picture now and take it away with me?" You forget that it has to be "developed" in the dark. Well, just so, you must develop the pictures on your mind in order to fix them in your memory. By meditating and thinking upon what we hear and read we shall stamp it upon our minds, till it will become almost impossible to forget it.

Children, learn to think. Practise the art of developing the pictures of your mind. Call up in your mind what you have read and heard, so you will make it part of your very self.

III

Then there is one other thing. Why do we forget so much? Because we do not practise what we hear. That, I think, is the chief reason—we do not practise it.

When you boys and girls go to school, you are given a rule in arithmetic to remember. How shall that rule be fastened on your mind so that you will never want to turn to a book of arithmetic to remember it? The only way is to go on doing a great many sums according to that rule. Then you will have got the principle of it so stuck in your mind that you will not be able to forget it. How do you get a rule in grammar into your mind? Why, by writing so many exercises according to that rule. Then you get to remember it so that you cannot forget it even if you try. How do you get any rule in music? Why, by playing and playing it over and over again until you have dinned it into your mind, and there it is—part of yourself, never to be forgotten.

Well, that is how we shall be able to remember the good things that we read and hear. They are given to us in order that we may do them. They are given to us of God in order that we may practise them. If you hear anything in a sermon that suits you well, go home with it and play it over, work it out as a sum, work it out as an exercise in grammar. I mean obey it, practise it. If anyone in the pulpit talks about a fault, and, as he is talking, you say, "Well, that is *my* fault; I don't want anyone else

to know, but that is my fault." Very well, go home and set to work to get rid of that fault. Work on Monday, Tuesday, and right on, day after day. Practise the thing you know to be true about yourself. The truth will get into you and form part of your very souls, never to be forgotten.

In this way we shall none of us waste our Sundays. I am afraid there are a great many Sundays wasted. It makes one feel sad to think that a Sunday should be wasted, but I feel sure that many Sundays are lost. A great many people, a great many boys and girls who come to church, are not one grain the better for coming. They are like the wayside Jesus Christ spoke of. If you took the best wheat and threw it on the pavement out there, the pavement would not be a bit better. But if you were to throw it into a field it would not be wasted. I am afraid that many of us get good things thrown on to our minds, and we are not the slightest, tiniest bit the better. That is a great pity, is it not?

Let me read to you another bit of the text. I said a hearer that forgetteth, but what St. James says is this, "*Not* a hearer that forgetteth." Make up your minds, God helping you, that you will belong to this last class—not hearers only, but hearers that listen, hearers that think, hearers that do, hearers whom God blesses.

May God bless and keep you, in Christ's name.

XVI

THE ANIMALS' PRAYER

“If a bird’s nest chance to be before thee in the way in any tree, or on the ground, with young ones or eggs, thou shalt not take the mother with the young: thou shalt in any wise let the mother go, but the young thou mayest take unto thyself; that it may be well with thee, and that thou mayest prolong thy days.”—DEUTERONOMY xxii. 6, 7.

I AM sure you must have noticed that people very often speak of animals as dumb animals because, though the animals feel as we feel—they feel joy and hope and fear and sorrow, feel them very deeply too—yet they cannot speak, they cannot explain, cannot complain as we can; and so, because they have no language that we understand, we call them dumb. I should like, then, this morning to speak for these dumb ones, to be a minister for all the animals, to carry a message from them and present their humble petition to you. Now what is it that they ask?

I

Well, first of all they beg you to give them as little pain as possible. They are all given to us for our use. Their very lives are in our hands.

We may kill them and commit no sin in doing so, but to give them pain beyond what is absolutely needed, that is sin. We have a right to take them, but we have no right to be cruel to them. We should exercise our rights tenderly, not ruthlessly, thoughtlessly.

Take the young, says the text, if you want them, but not the mother with the young. Let there be always a limit. Don't cause more pain than you can help. Now that is very often forgotten. We need the meat of animals to live, but for the sake of getting meat a little whiter and a little softer, the pains of death are long drawn out; in order that the veal may be soft upon the table, the poor calf is kept dying for a long time. Now that is a sin, because it is adding pain to pain where pain is not needed, and I hope, when you boys and girls grow to be men and women, you will remember this, and you will use whatever power or influence you have to protest against all the unnecessary pain that is caused to these animals.

Then again, a great deal of unnecessary pain is caused to performing animals. We have in London, from time to time, shows where dogs and other animals are put through wonderful tricks, and you go to see them, and you admire them; but if you knew how much cruelty lay behind it all I do not think you would ever go, for to be cruel to an animal in order that by its trick it might amuse you, that, it seems to me, is a sin against God.

Then again, we have the horses who serve us day by day in trams and 'buses. We have a right to

use them, but we have no right, in order to save ourselves the trouble of walking a few steps, or, if need be, of running a few steps, to make them stop time after time, and so give them the trouble of starting the whole heavy thing again. Sometimes you will see people get down at *this* point, and then, before the tram or 'bus has gone the length of this church, another man, sometimes even a woman, wants to get down; and then, before it has gone double the length of the church, somebody else wants to get down; and so, just in order to save walking a dozen yards, the poor, hard-worked horses are put to the trouble of starting the loaded car three times over.

Now what the horses of London say to you is this: You that ride in trams and 'buses, think of us. Life is hard enough for us already, little masters; do not make it any harder. That is the first clause in the petition of the animals—they beg you to give them as little pain as you can.

II

Then another thing is this: save them as much as you can from the cruelty of others. Strong though they are, they are quite helpless, because they have not got the understanding we have; and so a big strong horse, that with one stroke of his hoof, if he only knew how to use it, could teach the cruel man or the cruel boy a lesson he would never forget, is helpless against his tormentor. Now they pray you to be their friends, to stand by them,

and, so far as you can, to prevent others being cruel to them.

There is nothing more cruel than the habit which you see in the street every day of pulling at a horse's mouth. Think of the tender tongue, the most exquisitely tender thing in the whole body. Think of the tender mouth pulled back; it makes one's blood boil; and we, as men and women, and boys and girls, ought to try to protect these great, kindly, strong, patient creatures from this cruelty.

It is not an uncommon thing to see the horses on the tramway here, that help to draw the trams up the hill—the third horse—when his little brief journey is over, ill-treated, sometimes even kicked. It is a brutal thing to do, and I think that we, Christian people, Christian lads and lasses, should try all we can to protect these creatures. As children, you say, you can do very little. No, you cannot do very much, but if we all join together, and all the people in all the churches, thousands of them, in which sermons are being preached to-day on this subject—if we all join together, if we do nothing but stand and look, so as to bring the thing to the attention of men who are ill-treating these creatures, very soon these cruel men and boys will learn that there is a great public, a very great public, looking on, friendly to the creatures, and will feel that they are in the presence of the friends of the horses, and that they dare not carry on their cruelty.

The dog is called the friend of man. Not the

dog alone; all creatures are our friends, and they pray us to be their friends in return.

III

Now the third thing.

As I understand, the creatures beg for a little love from you all, as well as mere ordinary kindness. Of course you will feed your cats and dogs, birds and rabbits. Of course you will see to it that if your fathers and mothers should go away in the coming holidays, that the household pets are cared for in their absence. It makes one sad to find, on coming home, that the little things in our houses, while we were enjoying ourselves away, had been suffering for want of food. It is an awful thing, a thing that remains in a man's memory sometimes as long as he lives. I say, *of course* you will see to that. But what they ask beyond that is a little love. The animals all like love. God has made them so; they love to be spoken kindly to. It is a great pity that people think that a horse won't move unless they half crack their voices in speaking to him. It is a great mistake to think that they have to be shouted and sworn at. They like to be spoken to kindly as much as you do. If you only speak tenderly to a dog, why, his whole frame thrills with pleasure. If you speak roughly, how he slinks away, how he feels it. God has made him so; made him as tender in heart as you are. God has made him as fond of love as you are.

IV

The last thing they bid me tell you is this: remember the love of God. You are asked to be kind to them and to love them. Why? Because the God that made you and loves you made them and loves them. The love of God has come down to you through Jesus Christ, the great kindness of your Heavenly Father, and because you have received the love of God it is your duty to pass it on. Be kind to men and women, be kind to little children, but do not stop at that—be kind to everything. For the love of God don't even torture a fly with the point of a pin; for the love of God do not put your foot upon a worm; for the love of God do not kick aside carelessly and wantonly even a frog or a toad; for the love of God do not be unkind to anything that God has made, remembering that the great God which loveth you hath made and loveth all.

That is the petition of the animals to you boys and girls, and I hope, by the grace of God, you will all grant the petition.

XVII

“THOU”

“Then he said, Who shall begin the battle? And He answered, Thou.”—I KINGS xx. 14.

I THINK that texts may be divided into two sorts. There are some texts like bags; there are others like pegs. What I mean is this. If you take a bag, you open it to find what is in it, and take things out of it. But what you do with a peg is to hang things on it. Well, there are a great many texts in the Bible, and all you have to do is to open them and take things out of them. They are so full that you will have never done taking out. There are texts that are so full of truth that men began taking things out of them when they were boys, and have felt they were still full of great truths when they became old men. But there are other texts like pegs. All you can do is to hang things on them. That is the sort of text I have read to you this morning. There is nothing in it. It is not a bag, it is a peg. The story about it is this.

Two kings were going to war. One was the King of Israel, the man who ought to have been the leader of God's people; the other was the drunken

King of Syria, Benhadad ; and the Lord had told the King of Israel that if he fought this evil man God would help him. But when the two armies have come face to face, Ahab, the King of Israel, hangs back. He is loth to go forward with his work, and he says, "Who shall begin the battle?" and the answer that comes from God is "THOU, THOU."

Now there is nothing much in that text. It is not a bag, but it is a good peg, and I want to hang three things on to it, for you boys and girls.

I

You notice how very direct and compact it is. The king asks a question, and he gets an answer straight as a bullet—no playing, no beating about the bush. "*Thou.*" That is God's answer—" *Thou.*"

Well, I want you to remember this—that is exactly the way in which God speaks to all of us. He does not speak to us in hundreds or thousands. In the Bible God speaks to us one by one, boy by boy, girl by girl. If you take this Bible, this wonderful Book, and look through it, you will find a great many things commanded. You will find a great many orders in it. And should you lay down the Book and say, "Well, now, there are a great many orders in it for *somebody* ; there are a great many commands from God in this Book, but *who* are they for?" *You ! You !!* Whatever God says He says to you. You look through it again, and you say, "It is a curious Book—there are a great many *promises* in it." God promises very beautiful things

in this Book, both in this life and in the great life to come. He promises to be with some people—to be their Companion, so that they shall never feel lonely; to be their Helper, so that they shall never fail; to be their Comforter when trouble comes. Then, too, He promises to *reward* somebody, to give life for evermore to someone. Then if you close the Book and say, "Now I wonder who these promises are for? They are very nice, very beautiful, but whose are they?" *Yours*. They are for *you*. *Thou*. That is God's answer.

You have sometimes been in a room by yourself where there was a picture opposite that seemed to be looking straight at you, and at last it seemed to be looking so very straight that you felt a little uncomfortable. You got up from your seat, and went to another corner of the room, but the picture's eyes followed you till you were a little frightened. At last it seemed to be a living thing; wherever you went it had its eye on you. That is exactly what you find in the Bible. There are millions of people in the world, but the Bible is like the eye of God. It looks at each one—man by man, woman by woman, child by child. "Thou shalt"—that is the commandment. "Thou shalt not." God means each one of you. Don't put these things away from you, children. God means each one of you. He commands you, He promises you, He loves you, one by one.

There is a story told of a great preacher, one of the best men that ever lived and preached here in London—Edward Irving. He was very strong and

tall, altogether a grand man, but very, very tender-hearted. He once went into a house and met a little boy. He laid his great, strong hand on the boy's head. All he said to the lad was, "My lad, God loves you, God loves you." The boy had heard that many times before, but Edward Irving said it in such a way, there was something in the tone of the voice, that the boy was thrilled by it, and he ran away shouting all through the house, "God loves me." He had taken home what the text says, "Thou."

Now that is true of each one of you; God commands *you*, God loves *you*, one by one.

II

Then I want to hang one other little thing on this peg. We all admit, I suppose, that God does command us to do things, but we are all loth to begin. One great evil in life is that we constantly look at others, to see what other people are going to do. We want them to begin. Two boys fall out; they have a quarrel, a regular royal row, and they do not speak. They are angry with one another. Now they know very well that is wrong. They know very well they ought to make it up. Yes; but John says, "Let him speak first"; and Tom says, "No; Jack's got to come to me." Who is to begin? Who is to speak first? "THOU." That is God's command; don't wait for one another, let each try to be first. When there has been trouble between you, do not let one hang back

sullenly and say, "Let him beg pardon; let him speak first." You begin the battle against the devil, and win the honour of being the first—*thou*.

Then again, how very often do children, for instance, as well as grown-up people, see that there are little things to be done. Someone ought to do them. Someone ought to get up from a chair to give a seat to an elder person; someone ought to get up and open that door; someone ought to do it. But who? *You*. You that see it. The very fact that you see it is God's hint that you should do it. Be quick, be prompt. The very chance of doing right is the voice of God saying "Thou."

What a lesson the disciples of Jesus had. They came together on the last night of Christ's earthly life. It was the last time they were to meet thus in this world. It was the custom to wash the feet which had become dusty with travelling. Everyone felt that someone ought to do it. Thomas felt someone ought to do it, John felt someone ought to do it, but no one did it till Jesus Christ Himself, the Lord and Master, who was going to die for them on the Cross the next day, got up and went round like a servant, and washed the feet of all. He felt the thing was to be done, and He was the first to do it. I am sure they were very sorry. They would have been glad of a chance to do it themselves afterwards, but the opportunity never came again. You will some day be very sorry and say, "Oh, I wish I had that chance again." There are men who would give their right hand to have the chance they once had of being kind to their father, of being kind to

their mother; to be offered again the little tasks and kindly service which were once close to them. They would not have them then, and *now* they are gone for ever. Do things at once, ere they go—never to return.

III

The last thing I want to hang on the peg is this. You may say, "But I am such a little fellow," or "I am such a little girl, I cannot do much." Let me tell you this—you never know how much you can do till you try. No one knows that. It is in trying we find out how much we can do. Nothing good would have been done in the world if people had not tried. We cannot say how much we can do, but God can. Strength comes to everyone in trying to do good. In obeying God, God helps His people. Now take this home with you. God speaks to you one by one. The Bible is full of things for you; full of commands for you to obey, full of promises for you to claim, and full of love, to love you through life, through death, unto life eternal.

May God bless each one of you, through Jesus Christ.

XVIII

IMITATION

“Be ye therefore imitators of God, as beloved children.”—EPHESIANS
V. I.

THE word that St. Paul wrote was not imitators, but “mimics”—be ye therefore mimics of God, as dear children. Now children are naturally mimics; they love to imitate and copy. First, in their play. A great deal of the fun of play comes from mimicking, imitating somebody or something, playing at being a king, playing at being a father or a mother, or a master or a mistress. Play begins in imitation.

Then again, all our learning begins in imitation. We learn to read by imitating, we learn to write by imitating, we learn sums by imitating other sums. All our learning is an imitation. And then, when we grow up, all our life is an imitation. We take off somebody or other. We become like good men or we become like bad men; we follow this man or that. What the child does first with its sheet of paper and its big pencil, that always wants to be sharpened, is to copy, copy. That is really what men and women continue to do all through life—copy, copy.

Well, now, that is just the meaning of the text. St. Paul says, Copy God, copy God; be mimics, be imitators of God; for imitating God is the whole of goodness.

This Bible is a very big book, but all it says really means just that—copy God until you get to be like God. That is all that Jesus Christ asks of you. That is all that is meant by the Sunday school, by every good book you read, by every sermon you listen to. It just comes to that—that you should try to copy God until you get to be like God. But now, you will ask, is not that too great a commandment for a little fellow? Is not that too great a task to set before a little girl, to copy the great God? No, because copying God means copying God in His temper, in His gentleness, in His nobleness, in His patience; or, to put it in the shortest word possible, *copying God in His love*.

I do not know whether you ever think of the grandeur and the glory of God. Well, do you know what the glory of God *is*? What is it that makes God a glorious Being? Well, I will tell you, because He Himself has told us. There is a story, and a very delightful one it is, in the Book of Exodus, of how a very great and good man once, when he was praying—his name was Moses—asked God to let him see His glory, see the thing that made Him so grand and great. And do you know what God showed him? Not any crown, not any throne, such as an earthly king might have. He simply showed Moses His *goodness*. He made some vision or

picture—I do not know how it was done—some kind of panorama pass before the eyes of Moses, and Moses would know as he saw it passing, “that is God’s goodness I am looking at.” And that was what God meant—that it was His goodness that made Him glorious, made Him God. He might be God if He had not got a throne, if He had not got a crown, if He had not got power, if He had not got heaven. If He lost all these things He would still be God, because He would still be good. The glory of God is the goodness of God, and copying God means not copying His power, His greatness, His knowledge, but copying that in Him which is the best thing in Him, His goodness. You have read the story of Jesus Christ, and you have seen pictures of Jesus Christ. Well, now, what was Christ like? He did not go about with a crown upon His head. You see some pictures with a ring of light about His head. That light has been put there by the painter. It was not really round the head of Jesus Christ. What men saw in Him was a poor man, a very sad-faced man oftentimes, walking about just like other people; and if you think of it, in one way there could be nothing more unlike God than Jesus Christ, nothing more unlike the great throne of God in heaven with all the angels singing to Him. And, on the other hand, there could be nothing more like God. Why? He was like Him in character, He was like Him in temper, He was gentle, noble, and generous. He was a perfect copy—that is what the New Testament calls Him—a perfect copy of God. And so that is what the New

Testament, and what Jesus Christ tells us—ye shall be perfect in love, like your Father in heaven.

Is not there anything else? you say. No, nothing else; nothing. If you, children, only learn to love as God loves, that is all that is wanted, because love is everything. If you take the root of an apple tree and plant it in your garden, and it grows up, well, you will have nothing from that tree but apples, because you have only planted an apple root. If you plant a rose root, and it grows, you will get nothing but roses. Why? Because you planted a rose root. If you sow wheat in a field you will get nothing but wheat. No farmer expects to get barley and corn and maize when he has sown wheat, because these are "one thing" seeds, they can only give one thing. But if you sow love, that is an "everything seed"; you need not sow anything else in all your life. Everything will grow then, everything that is beautiful; you will have every form of goodness if you only copy *God's love*.

In the last book of the Bible, St. John tells us of a very beautiful sight that he once saw. He saw a lovely city, so beautiful that its very walls were all pearls, and its gates and streets were all gold, and he saw running through it a bright clear crystal river, and growing on either side of the river he saw a wonderful tree. He calls it the tree of life. And do you know what was wonderful about it? Well, it had not got merely one kind of fruit, it had all manner of fruit; everything that was pleasant to look at, sweet to the smell or sweet to the taste. It was an "all-manner of fruit" tree; it grew every-

thing. Now do you know what the root of that tree was? Do you know what that tree grew from? It grew from a root called love; love was the root of it; love was the tree of life; love means everything. So when Jesus Christ was going from this world, and the time was getting short, He did not say, as we say when we are leaving our friends for a time, when we are about to go from home for a good long time—we have such a number of things to say that we often ask, “Now let me see, is that all?” No; there is something else, and there are ever so many things to say. But Jesus Christ, when He was going away, was not like that at all. He did not say, Now, Peter, you must remember this, and this, and this; and John, that and that. He did not do that at all. He was in no hurry. He did not have much to say; He had only one thing. He said to them, “A new commandment give I unto you—love one another.” Anything else, Lord? Nothing; that is all, for love is everything.

Copy God in love, little children, and you will have every form of goodness in you; you will have nothing wanting. Be ye mimics of God; study God; read about Him in the New Testament. That is the best part of the Bible. The best part of the Bible is the four Gospels—Jesus Christ. Just study the life of Jesus Christ; make it your model; carry it with you in your mind, so that when you are tempted it shall come before you, and you will say, that is what I have got to copy. You may have rude boys and girls around you, who will say, “Copy me.” You will say, “No, you are not my

model ; that is not my business ! I am not drawing copies of you. *This is my model.* Like the Psalmist 'I have set the Lord at my right hand, and I shall not be moved.'"

That is my sermon for you, boys and girls : Try to copy God.

Have you ever seen an artist copying a picture ? You may see one any day at the National Gallery or the British Museum. How does he copy ? I will tell you. He goes up, takes off his hat ; he looks very solemn. He goes up and stands before the picture, and he opens a book and reads about the picture, and he sings a hymn to it, and he says what a lovely picture ; he closes his book, picks up his hat, and goes out. That is how he copies, is it ? *No, that is not how he copies :* he would never make a copy like that. That is how we copy sometimes. We come to church and sing about God, and sing, "God make my life a little light," and so forth ; but you never get a copy by singing about a picture. I will tell you how he does it. He takes his palette and his brushes and his easel ; he looks at the picture, and fills in one line here, another line there, then another line, then another look. It is a look, then a line, then another touch ; day after day, studying, studying. That is how the picture goes on. That is how you copy God, by looking at Him in Jesus Christ. A look and a line, a look and a line.

May God help you in your work. Amen.

XIX

SPRING-TIME

“For, lo, the winter is past, the rain is over and gone.”—SONG OF SONGS ii. 11.

THAT text has come true for thousands and thousands of years. Many, many thousands of years before you and I were born, the hearts of men and women and little children were made glad when they said to each other, “The winter is past, the rain is over and gone, the flowers appear on the earth, the time of the singing of birds is come.” And for thousands and thousands of years most likely after you and I will have passed away from this world, the hearts of people will be glad in just the same way. A thousand years to-day, and two thousand years to-day in this very country, people will look at each other, and smile gladly and say, “The winter is past, the rain is over and gone, the flowers appear, the time of the singing of birds is come.” And it now has come for us, and it brings almost to everyone some measure of happiness. We are all made glad a little by seeing that again the spring and summer have come. The wonderful thing has been done once more. Once more the

naked earth is clothed, the shivering trees are clad with a mantle of leaves, and the birds have come, some of them thousands and thousands of miles over sea. Many of them have been here several times. They have come back again. How they find their way we do not know, but they *do*. God leads them, and gives us all this beautiful spring and summer music.

Well, now, what lesson is there in a text like this, especially for children? It seems to me there are a great many lessons here. It is like a flower-bed. One might go on picking and picking from it all the morning. But I will just pick out two—two lessons from the text, two lessons from the beautiful season. And the first is this. Boys and girls, learn to get your pleasure out of little things. That is the first thing. Learn the art of being pleased and made happy by little, simple things; things that do not cost, things that all can get, and things that all can get always. There is a very foolish old saying which says, "Little things please little minds." That is not true, it is not even half true; simple-minded people always want great things, big things, costly things, out-of-the-way things. It is a sign of true greatness in a man, and of true wisdom, that he is able to see beauty in simple things, and to take his pleasure out of things that are common, that abound.

You read the history of Jesus Christ. He never had much money. We never read of anybody giving Him any money, or paying Him for anything He did; but He drew His pleasure from things that did not want money: from lilies that grew at His

feet and looked up into His face, from the careless ways of happy birds wheeling around Him and plunging in the air, from sunny-eyed little children, from men and women, and from all God's common things. And that is the mark of every true and wise man. Every great poet, for instance, is great, and is a poet because he sees great things in little things, and beauty in simple things. Learn, then, not to have expensive tastes, not to want a great deal of money to make you happy. Have the source of your happiness within you. Learn how to take pleasure out of a bright morning or a bright hour, out of a wet morning, out of clouds and sunshine, out of God's simple happy birds, out of simple food and simple dress. Learn to make yourselves happy out of those things you can always look forward to possess, and which will be with you to the very last. You know if you start singing a hymn or some school song, you sometimes pitch your voice too high at the start, and you know what happens then. Well, you can't rise; you have pitched the thing too high, and you break down. Do not pitch too high; don't expect great things. The wisdom of a man or woman lies very greatly not in looking for great things—they rarely come to anybody—but in finding pleasure out of little simple, common things that God is always making, and everybody may have. Now that is the first.

And the second lesson I want to pick out of this text is this—learn to give pleasure by doing little things. God is wonderful in the way He does little things. He has placed us here in this world, and

we can see both His great and His small things. We can see every night His great worlds, every day His great sun; and sometimes when we get away from London, we can see some of His great mountains and His great rivers. They are very wonderful, God's great things, but He has made a great many little things, and it seems as if God's little things were more beautifully made than the big things. He shows His wisdom and His wonderful skill in the perfection with which He makes and finishes small things.

Well, now, children, it is rarely given to you, perhaps never will be given to you, to do very big things. Of course we would all like to have a great thing to do, and to win a great deal of glory by doing it. But God does not send big things in the way of most people. Our only chance of giving pleasure lies, then, in doing the little common, simple things that come in our way every day—doing them splendidly, doing them beautifully. Indeed most men do the *big things* well when they come. There is something in a great thing that if it is done you don't criticise the way in which it is done. If a child falls into the river off London Bridge, well, there is never wanting someone ready to plunge in to save it. No one asks how he dashed in; whether it was a graceful dive or a plunge, whether he caught up the child nicely or grabbed him by the hair. He just saved the child—that is the thing wanted.

But in the little things, such as shutting the door, for instance, how many children know how to shut a door nicely? When I am a king I will have an

examination for shutting doors. Another thing I must say, half the unhappiness in homes arises at meal times. These times, which ought to be most happy, are often turned into most unhappy times. Now learn, then, to get pleasure out of simple, common little things. Learn to give pleasure by the exquisite, dainty, clever, and gentle and godly way in which you do the little things that come in your way. Be God Almighty's little gentlemen, God Almighty's little ladies, courteous, kind, simple, beautiful, not doing great things, not having the chance or the power, but doing little things exquisitely, so that men and women's hearts, seeing your good works, may praise your Father who is in heaven. May God help you to be faithful in little, to gladden the world like flowers in spring, and cheer it like the birds that sing in summer. Amen.

XX

FLOWERS AND BIRDS

“The flowers appear on the earth ; the time of the singing of birds is come.”—SONG OF SONGS ii. 12.

I

“THE flowers appear on the earth ; the time of the singing of birds is come.” I do not think there is anything more beautiful in all the world than a flower. It does not matter very much which flower, all flowers are so pretty. And I do not think there is anything more beautiful in the air than a bird. It does not matter very much which bird, they all look so free and graceful as they fly. They make the air so sociable, so full of pretty forms and sweet sounds. All men, since men have been, have taken a pleasure in the common flowers and in the common birds. There are many things which the people who wrote the Bible saw which we shall never see. There are many things which we see to-day which they did not see. But when you look down into the face of a fresh, rain-washed flower, you may feel sure that you are looking at that which has given joy to untold generations of

men, so that you and all the ages of the past meet together in one little flower. And when you listen to the singing of a bird in a bush, and feel glad there is such pretty music in the world, you feel exactly as men have felt since the beginning of time, and as boys and girls will feel till the end of the world; for on to the very end of time spring will follow winter, flowers will appear upon the earth, birds will sing in the air, and the hearts of men will be made glad by the goodness and power of God.

II

COMMON FLOWERS AND COMMON BIRDS

I like to be shown over a rich man's garden now and again, and to see the spoiled favourites that are kept in hothouses and looked after and tended so carefully night and day, but I like still better the outdoor flowers that grow on common ground, that have no one to look after them, but yet get on splendidly. They have God for their Gardener; the sun warms them, the rain waters them, the wind strengthens them, and so they grow.

And then the common birds, not the rare things that are found here and there in rich men's palaces, but just the common, impudent, perky London sparrows, that will scarcely get out of your way as you walk along the streets, the ravens and the robins, the blackbirds and throstles. How beautiful they are, the common birds and common flowers! "Solomon," said Jesus Christ, "in all his glory was

not clothed like one of these." Solomon was a man who thought much about dress; he used to take a great deal of time and trouble to dress himself; he wore many fine ornaments, and used to powder his long black hair with gold dust till it shone in the sun as he rode or was carried along, and people said, "How splendid!" But Jesus says, Look at these lilies, these wild flowers growing in the open air. Solomon was not clothed like one of these. Oh, how full of beautiful things the world is! And God has made the common things beautiful in order that we may love them. Yes, that is the meaning of all the beauty, that we may love God and all His works.

III

Again, birds and flowers are such little things. Yes, but it is the *little* things that go to make every life perfect. A clever man once made a speech on what he called the "next-to-nothings," and showed how important the little things are. In every piece of machinery it is not simply the great wheels that count, but the little next-to-nothings also. And so it is in the home-life. Politeness, courtesy, saying "Thank you" when you get something, asking for it with a kindly "If you please" when you want it, looking cheerful when you are told to do a thing. Well, they are little things, they are "next-to-nothings." Yet how poor, hard, and barren human life would be without them. One swallow does not make a summer, but it helps to make the summer fuller. One bird helps to brighten the world, and

the whole air is sweeter for the smell of one little flower.

We are very little people, even the biggest of us. We shall not do great things. Our business is to brighten that little plot of life God has given us. It is not for us to choose our task, only to choose to do it well.

You remember how Jacob wrestled with the angel all night, and that when the day broke the angel wanted to get away? Well, there is a curious story told out of the Bible, that when Jacob asked the angel, "Why do you want to get away at day-break?" the angel said, "To-day is the first day for me to praise God since I was created. There are so many angels, and they all want to praise God, that I have never had a chance to sing to Him till this morning." But our turn comes every day, just as the turn of the bird comes every morning. Let us never miss a single chance, then, of praising God, not only by our words but much more by our deeds.

IV

There is one other thing. The time of the flowers and the singing of birds is come, it comes year by year with never a break. The birds come from far countries to sing to us, and God shows them the way to England, every step. So there is great hope that, at the last, the winter of this life shall pass away; that all little children who suffer, who are very poor, who are cruelly treated, and all men and women who have great sorrow, and have to face

sickness and poverty and death, shall pass into a new life of great joy. God, who brings the flowers into the earth and brings the birds from afar, will show us all the way home, to a home so beautiful we shall never want to leave it; and when we get there, to heaven, by the grace and love of God, then we shall all say, "The flowers have indeed at last appeared, and the time for the singing of birds has come."

May God bless you and keep you, for His own love's sake. Amen.

XXI

LADIES AND GENTLEMEN

“Blessed are the meek; for they shall inherit the earth.”—
MATTHEW v. 5.

PERHAPS you will understand what is meant better if I put another word for it, “Blessed are the gentle,” because that is what Jesus means. Meekness means gentleness; meek men are gentlemen.

Well, now, what does He mean by saying, “Blessed are the gentle”? What sort of people are the gentle people?

First of all, He meant gentleness of *spirit*. And what is gentleness in the heart of a boy or girl? Well, if you pull it to pieces I think that you will find, first, a pretty big bit of humbleness. If a boy has a lot of pride you may be sure that there is no gentleness. In order that there may be gentleness of spirit one must not think too much of one's self; one must not expect too much from other people, there must be a big bit of humbleness. And then again, there must be a pretty big bit of patience, willingness to take and to bear things quietly, not to fly out and get cross. I think that where you find

gentleness you will find a big bit of patience. And then you will find a very big bit of obedience to the commandments of God, and of love to God. Where there is a disobedient spirit there is no gentleness. And if you put these three things together—humbleness, patience, and obedience—you will get the things that go to make a gentle spirit; and when you have put them all together, you get one of the most beautiful things in all the world—gentleness.

One of the apostles, Peter, speaking in a letter that he wrote about the pretty ornaments that people used to wear in his day—of course there were little girls then, as there are now, who thought they made themselves very pretty by wearing as much gold or silver as they could get and as many fine clothes as they could get—Peter tells them of something that is much prettier, “the ornament of a meek” (that is the ornament of a gentle) “and quiet spirit,” which is in the sight of God, he says, of great price.

I do not know what God thinks about gold—He has made a lot of it; nor do I know what He thinks of silver—He has made that also; or what He thinks of diamonds—He has made them all. But at anyrate we are sure of this, He thinks a great deal of a child who makes himself beautiful with the ornament of a meek, quiet, gentle spirit.

Then again, gentleness means gentleness of *speech*, the spirit coming out in gentle, quiet words. A boy's words show the kind of boy he is, and they go to make him more and more that sort of boy. A boy who is always speaking loud, cross, angry, violent words makes himself crosser, louder, angrier the

more he talks in that way. I think of a boy who is given to loud and angry expressions as a little volcano, sending up a stream of smoke and flame and burning stone, spitting it out at the heavens but never touching a cloud, burning nobody but itself. All it sends up falls down again and scorches its own poor barren sides—it burns nobody but itself. So a boy who is always hitting out, shouting, getting cross, saying the nastiest things he can lay hold of, well, he hurts other people a little, but he burns his own poor life, scorches himself, till at last it stands bleak and black, without a single flower, without one beautiful thing upon it. "A soft answer turneth away wrath," lets it go by; but a grievous answer stirreth it up—as you put a poker in the fire and stir it up. Gentleness is gentleness of speech.

Then again, it means gentleness of *action*, gentleness of deeds. Bluster and abuse will not carry you very far in this world. Remember, boys and girls, that this life is movement through a dense crowd. Now, if a man wants to get through a crowd quickly it is no use taking the law into his own hands, and elbowing on either side and saying, "Get out of my way." He will surely come in contact by and by with someone like himself, who will say, "Get out of *my* way," and there will be a scene. Do you want to get out of a crowd? The thing best of all is a smile and an "if you please." A man with a blustering spirit is like a man with his coat all covered with hooks, and wherever he goes he catches himself, and causes a lot of bother and trouble to other people. If you want to go through life

smoothly for yourselves and others, do not be in a hurry; do not be ready to take offence; do not expect perfection from anyone; do not make much of trifles; go quietly on your way; have a bad memory for some things; learn to forget and to disremember; do not carry a lot of old rubbish with you; be gentle in heart; be gentle in word; be gentle in action. Blessed are the gentle; they shall inherit the land—that is, the best of life shall be theirs. Rough, cross, worried people lay traps and snares to catch unhappiness.

There is a sight which I do not like to see at all, and I do not think you do, which we do see rather too often about the open fields of Clapton—the bird catchers. They cover a piece of ground with nets, and by means of decoy birds they bring down other birds. Cross, angry people are like them, only what they catch is not sweet-voiced, pretty little birds, but they attract all kinds of worries; they lay down nets and traps to catch unhappiness, and you may be sure you will get enough angers and troubles without trying to catch that.

I was reading about some sailors in an open boat on the open sea, and what do you think they did to keep the water from washing into the boat? When the water got very rough and into the boat, they emptied a little oil out on to the sea. Blessed be oil. There is plenty of it; only use it. This is the way to smooth all roughness in the house and in the class, the way to smooth the voyage of life—the oil of gentleness will keep these waves from washing over you.

The finest name we have in the English language is taken from this text. When we wish to say the best thing we can of a man we do not say a rich, a strong, old or young man; our best word is a "gentleman." A gentleman is one who is gentle in spirit, gentle in word, gentle in deed. And there was one very clever and good man who said that a Christian was "God Almighty's gentleman." Try to belong to the order of true gentlemen and gentlewomen, boys and girls, so that your life may be overshadowed by this great word of Jesus Christ, "Blessed are the gentle; they shall inherit the land."

XXII

WHAT IS IT ALL FOR?

“On that day went Jesus out of the house, and sat by the seaside.”—
MATTHEW xiii. 1.

IF I were asked to say which chapter in all the Bible I liked best I should not be able to answer. But if you were to ask me to name the five chapters I most cared for I think this would be one of them. It is so full of moving pictures. The sea is always popular with children when the question of where to go for our Sunday-school treat comes up. Well, here is a picture of the sea. Everything else may have changed, but the sea is to-day exactly what it was on that day when Jesus went forth from the hot, close house and sat by the seaside. You can see it all, can you not? The crowds gather round Him, and so He gets into a boat and sits while He talks to the people. It is a bright, calm day, and the little lazy waves come lip lap lapping against the sides of the boat. The children are building castles on the sand. Presently the voice of Jesus reaches them—such a sweet, gentle

voice. They leave their castles half built, and burrow their way through the crowd to see who is talking. They see the Speaker. He is clothed in a blue mantle; His auburn hair falls over His shoulders; His face is thin; but oh! His eyes, so deep and sad and tender. Every child feels that those eyes are looking at him. But no one is afraid, though all are still. The children understand the language of those eyes, for it is the language of a great love.

Then above the little bay is a great field with men at work. They have ploughed and harrowed, and now they are sowing it. That again is a picture I love. I like to see a big open field with a path leading through it. I like to hear the swish of the seed as it falls through the air, and, though the farmer loves them not, I like to see the birds that follow the sower and snatch a mouthful when and where they can.

And then to see the same field in harvest. Is there on earth anything finer than a field of ripe corn bowing in the wind and gleaming in the sun? It heaves and falls like a lake. The noise of its rustling is like the sound of a summer sea. It calls the reaper and tells him that all is ready. Then comes the harvest, when work is like play. Everybody is happy. The sheaves are gathered, and men sing again the song of harvest home. These are some of the pictures we see if we look into the great chapter which Jesus spoke as He sat in the gently rocking boat to the people standing on the shore.

II

But what is it all about? Well, it is all about one thing. The farmer has many things to do. He has to plough and harrow and weed and feed his field, to sow it and watch it. Then when he can do no more, sun, moon, and stars, wind and clouds, and the powers hidden in the earth, have their wonderful work to do. But all these works and workers aim at one and the same thing—a good crop of wheat. “Fruit,” as Jesus says, is the thing aimed at all along.

The soldier has many things to learn. He has to learn to walk, to stand, to turn, to take aim, to ride, and so on; but they all mean one thing—that is, to fight his country’s battles when he is called upon.

The student has many things to do and learn, but they all mean some one thing at last—to make him a doctor skilful at healing the sick, or a lawyer well able to plead in courts, or a painter to make beautiful pictures, or a musician to play well on a piano or violin. In each case the many things are for the sake of the one great thing. So it is in your case. You go to a day school. You pass from class to class. You have lessons and examinations. You learn this and that.

What is it all for? It is all for one thing, that you may be able by and by to take your part in life. An ignorant man or woman is like a soldier in battle without weapons. The aim of the day school is to put arms in your hands, and teach you to use them, so that you may be able to fight your battle; and whenever you feel tired or lazy it would be well

for you to think of this—to think of the one great thing which is the end and aim of school life. You have examinations now, but they are trifles. The great examination will be after school is over. Life itself is the great inspector.

Well, now, this is our anniversary—a day without lessons. What is the use of a Sunday-school Anniversary? It is a kind of halt in the march, a day to think about things. If you would but just think a little more what all this Sunday-school work is for, it would be a good thing. You learn lessons from the Bible—from the Old Testament and the New. You hear many good things said. You hear yourselves prayed for. What is it all for? It is all for just one thing—that you may be persuaded to obey Jesus Christ as long as you live. The day schools seek to make you able, the aim of the Sunday school is to make you good. That is all. You'll forget the lessons. Perhaps in ten years' time you will not remember a single thing you have learned here. That doesn't matter. You will forget the sums you do in school, but if you learn to count that won't matter. You'll forget the dictation lessons, and the grammar lessons every one, but if you remember how to spell and speak correctly it won't matter in the least.

And so you may forget the Sunday-school lessons, but if as the result of your time here you make up your mind to obey Jesus Christ all your life, you will have done just the very thing your teachers are aiming at. All the teaching, the preaching, the praying, the playing, is for that one thing.

Now will you think of this? Will you think of it sometimes while you are in school? Will you remember it when you leave school? When you are tempted to do wrong, to go with evil companions, to speak as they speak, will you say to yourself, "No! I was trained for other things. I was trained to follow Christ. My teachers, my father, my mother, and my minister, carried the work on in me as far as they could, and now God helping, *I* will carry it on to the end"?

XXIII

A LION STORY

“Benaiah the son of Jehoiada, went down also and slew a lion in a pit in a snowy day.”—I CHRONICLES xi. 22.

I WONDER how did he do it. The snow was on the ground, and the lion had been driven by hunger from the forest, and had come nearer and nearer to where people were living, and there he was in this pit hiding himself, on the watch for anybody that might pass, so that he might spring out and kill him; so at last this man made up his mind that he would go down and kill the lion.

Well, now, how does a man set about it who goes to kill a lion? How should we set about it, when we have got anything to overcome and conquer in our own lives? We have all got our lions to kill. One has got his temper—a black, angry, bad little temper. It is a lion, and must be killed. Another has got a little habit of telling “white lies.” That has to be killed. Another has a lion of sloth and laziness. Well, that has to be settled. We must kill our lions. I wonder how did Benaiah set about it. The first thing was to make up his mind to do it. He did not do it at once; he had to think

about it. People said, Benaiah, there is that lion out there ; we do not know what to do. And he went and thought, and thought, until at last he said, "I will, I will, I will." He made up his mind.

Now you know some people never get to the point of saying "I will." They only get to the point of saying "Perhaps," or "I will see," or "I may." Now, "I may," and "perhaps," and "I think," are soft words. They are like putty or wax. You can make anything of them. But "I will," that is a sharp word, "I will." So if you are going to do anything in life, if you are going to kill any of your lions, you must begin by getting your courage up to the point of "I will."

Then the second thing Benaiah did was to keep up his courage. It is one thing to make up your mind, another thing to keep up your courage to the sticking point. Of course when Benaiah said he would go and kill the lion, the people said, "What a brave man he is!" Then, when the morning came, the people stood looking at him, and all the children held their breath, and their eyes were like capital O's. They spoke in whispers, and said, "He is going to kill a lion." He was, of course, a few inches taller than usual! But when he got outside the village, and there was no one in sight, he felt cold and wretched. I am sure of that. And there was something in him that wanted to go back. Then the snow fell, and the wind blew ; everything was in one great misty whirl. The chief thing he wanted then was to keep his courage up to the mark. But he had said "I will," and he did it.

Some people's lives are all beginnings. If I could see the diaries you boys and girls keep, what should I see? *January 1st.*—Began to learn Latin. Began to read English History. Read Macaulay's Essays. Learned the banjo, and began to take lessons on the violin. *January 2nd.*—Began something else. But as I go on I find the entries get less; and by the time March has come I ask, "How have you got on with your Latin?" "Oh, I tossed it away." "What have you done with the violin?" "I gave it to my sister." "How about Macaulay's Essays?" "Frightfully dry; gave them up." You did not keep up your courage. Now, for the sake of your soul, when you begin a thing, finish it. Go on; keep the courage up.

Then there was another thing Benaiah had to see to. It was caution. It must have been a job to get down to where the lion was. He had only a shield on his left arm and a short sword in his right hand. Now, how to get down, that was the job. He had to go down very, very cautiously from one place to the other, holding on, and cleaving to the rock, and praying with all his might to God to keep him from falling. There he is at last, right down at the bottom of the pit, and the great, yellow, angry, snorting beast wondering what is the meaning of it all. There they are, the two living things at the bottom of the pit, and of the two, only one can leave the pit alive. And when down there it took all Benaiah's courage to keep him standing straight. He must have prayed with might and main to God to keep him to his work. They began

moving round and round the pit, the lion just trying to get the best point from which to make the spring; and, as they move round and round, at last Benaiah's foot just stumbles for a moment against a stone. It seems as if he were going to fall. That is the moment, the very moment that the lion makes a spring; but fortunately he comes on the point of the sword, and in one awful moment down he falls on his back, a huge bleeding mass, and Benaiah stands above it. Oh, it is warm enough now. It was cold when he came out, but now the perspiration runs in beads off his forehead. The first thing he does is to look right up through the blinding snowstorm, and say, "O God, I thank Thee, I do thank Thee." That was the very first thing.

Now, if you are really going to conquer the sin within you, you must get to work in that same cautious way. There must be no brag or swagger about it. You must not go out and do the great task of life as if you were great people. You must go out with caution and modesty, and praying God to help you; and then, with God's grace you will do what Benaiah did, you will slay your lion.

Then after a little rest perhaps he measured him, to see how big he was. I can forgive him that. The next job was to bring him up, but it was not so hard as going down. At last he got him up to the top of the pit, and someone who was on the lookout in the village sees him, sees that Benaiah is alive. The old people forget they are old; they run as fast as young people. The whole village comes crying, laughing, and shouting; and then

they met Benaiah dragging the big thing, with all the boys and girls in the village helping. There were almost as many hands as hairs upon it, everyone helping to bring it. Then when they arrived what a cheer they gave! and when he listened to their cheer, Benaiah felt it was well worth all the peril and the cold. It was all paid for when he heard the shout of relief, the cheers and praise of the people rending the wintry air.

Ah, boys and girls, believe me, it is worth while being noble, it is worth while being brave everywhere. It never pays to be a coward. Be manly, be strong, be brave, be gentle, be good, and out of your goodness shall come your happiness.

Now when you read stories like this, in or out of the Bible, try to remember what St. Augustine said when he read a similar story. He closed the book, and said, "Let us too conquer something."

May God help you to kill your lions.

XXIV

A QUEER EXCUSE

“Whoso robbeth his father or his mother, and saith, It is no transgression; the same is the companion of a destroyer.”—PROVERBS xxviii. 24.

YES, there can be no doubt that a child who does that is thoroughly wicked, has become very naughty and bad indeed. We can all see that; but I am not going to talk to you, children, this morning about that. You who are here, I hope, whether boys or girls, are not tempted to do such things. Why, then, do you ask, should you read us that text? Well, I will tell you. This child in the text thought that because he did a thing in his own home, to his own father and mother, it did not matter. He would not do this to strange people, he would not do it in a strange house,—at least, not as yet,—but he thought that robbery at home was not a sin because it was done to his own father and mother.

I

Well, now, what I want to ask *you* is this, are there not a great many children who think that the

evil they do at home is less wicked because it is done at home? Don't some of you even allow yourselves liberty to do and say things at home that you would not think of doing or saying from home? Isn't there any little girl in this congregation this morning who would not think of being rude, for instance, to a strange lady she had never met before, and yet is rude sometimes to her own mother, and does not think it any great harm? Isn't there some little boy here, in the midst of all these boys, who would never think of being rude to his master in school, who would give a very polite answer to a gentleman that spoke to him in the street, and yet is not quite so gracious in his answers in his own home, to his father or mother? Are there no young children here this morning who, when they go to a children's party, are simply beautiful in their behaviour? They are pleased with everything that is set before them, they like everything, they answer most sweetly and prettily, and they try to please each other; the bigger ones take part in games in order to make the little ones happy, and altogether they are nice, satisfied, pleasant children *away from home*. But when they go home—what? Well, first they take off their party clothes—fold them up nicely, put them carefully by in a drawer; and along with them they take off their nice behaviour—fold that up carefully; take the smiles off their lips—put them down; take the brightness out of their eyes—put that away; all the satisfaction, all the trouble to please others, take them all off, fold them up in a nice little packet, put them in the drawer with the

best clothes, till the next party. Isn't that done sometimes? And don't those children also feel that when they are a little discontented, a little rude to one another, when they find fault with things, don't they feel, like the child in the text, that somehow there is no wrong, no transgression, no sin, because they are at home? It does not matter, it is simply *home!*

II

But now for another question. If a thing is wicked in itself, is it less wicked because it is done to one that loves you than it would be to one who never saw you before, never cared for you, and never wanted to see you again? Does love to you make the sin more, or less? What do you think of the first murder? Cain killed his brother. Now did the fact that the man he killed was his brother make his crime greater or less? Take David. Saul, the king, tried to kill him. Later on, Absalom, David's son, rose up against him, and sought his life and kingdom. Which do you think was the worse of the two? King Saul or Prince Absalom? Which gave more pain to David? Was it not the crime against love? Then think of Jesus Christ. The soldiers, you remember, took Him to Calvary, and drove the nails through the palms of His hands, and nailed Him to the cross. Perhaps they had never seen or heard of Him before, or of the thieves who were crucified with Him. They simply did what they were commanded, without any feeling either way. Then there was Judas, who had been with

Him for three years, whom He trusted, and loved, and honoured. Judas came to Him in the garden, and betrayed Him to His enemies with a kiss. Which do you think was the worse of the two—the nails or the kiss? Which gave Jesus most pain? The soldiers or the false friend? Don't you think it was Judas, because he sinned against love? So do you not think this child of the text, instead of saying, "It is no transgression," ought to have felt that robbery at home *was* a great, very great sin, because it was a sin against law and love? The doing of this to father and mother made it not less, but greater.

And so, dear boys and girls, let me leave this thought with you. Don't think that rudeness, dissatisfaction, unkindness, discourtesy cease to be wicked in the home; rather they become more wicked. Rudeness in the home is ruder than in the school. Discourtesy, discontent in the home, are greater sins (for they *are* sins) than in the Christmas party. You had better behave badly among people that do not care very much for you, and who can protect themselves against you by simply forgetting to ask you next Christmas, than at home, where you are so greatly loved, and where, therefore, your sin gives so much pain. Don't sin against love, don't hurt love; love is so tender, so beautiful, so precious.

I have seen a very touching epitaph which some children put on the grave of their mother. It is only one line, but I think it is very beautiful. It is this—

"She always made home happy."

Is not that beautiful? But it is not *all* the truth.

No mother could do that; no father could do it. To make a home happy is more than any *one* can do. If that home, out of which that mother went, was so happy, you may depend upon it that she was helped by a lot of little people, and if she could only see and read the line her children have put on her tombstone, she would say, "Oh, the dear boys and girls, they were always very kind to me; but that is not all the truth; I tried, of course, but I never could have done it if I had not been helped so much by them." That is what she would say.

So, however small you may be, remember this to-day, take it with you and keep it as long as you live, that God commits to every one of you the care of a bit of the happiness of the *home*. Do you see these pillars in the church? Well, the builder has given to each one of these a certain portion of the weight of that roof to hold, and here they all stand, week in week out, each holding up its own bit of roof. So we are pillars in the home, and God has placed upon us something of the weight of the home's happiness. See that you do not forget the duty that God has put upon you, and *never* think that bad things cease to be bad because they are done at home, but remember that they are worse, because they are sins against love.

XXV

THE CENSUS

“If a man have a hundred sheep, and one of them be gone astray, doth he not leave the ninety and nine, and go unto the mountains, and seek that which goeth astray?”—MATTHEW xviii. 12.

THERE are some things which no one ever thinks of counting. We take them in the mass. We speak of a swarm of bees, but never dream of asking how many bees make a swarm. If one or two get lost in the course of a day, the beekeeper does not go out to look for the lost ones. He does not even know that they are lost.

How many grains of wheat make a field? No one can tell. No one thinks of asking such a question. There is no such measure to be found among your tables. We don't count the grains of wheat. Nor the drops of water in a glass—a few more or less make no difference.

But if a man have a hundred sheep, he counts each one. See, the flock has come home from the fields. The farmer stands at the gate of the fold reckoning them as they pass in. He begins with one, two, three. At last he gets up to ninety-six,

ninety-seven, eight, n-i-n-e-t-y-n-i-n-e—he says it slowly, for he is looking round for the other one.

But that is not to be found. “Well, but, farmer, you have a fine lot still. You have ninety-nine.” “Yes,” he answers, “but there’s one missing. I must go in search of that one.” “When will you be back?” “I don’t know. I must seek till I find my lost sheep.”

So it is with money. Jesus tells of a certain woman that had ten pieces of money. One day she counted them, and could only find nine. Do what she would she could not make more than nine.

“Oh, well! nine is a good sum.” “Yes! yes! but I had ten. Where can the tenth be?” And she lighted a candle, and with a broom had a regular spring-cleaning (as so many others are having at this very time), till she found the missing coin.

Then of course you remember that other story which Jesus told of a man that had two sons. One of these went away from home, and was lost for a long time. He did not write home or send any message. He was lost.

The home was a beautiful one. The father was rich, and kept many servants. There were all sorts of fine clothes, and gold rings, and musical instruments in the house. But if you could have seen the master you would have known very easily that he had some great trouble on his mind. A child could have seen the sadness in his face and oftentimes the traces of tears in his eyes.

What is the matter? He is grieving for a lost

son. He has one at home still, but he cannot forget that other. He has only lost one, but one son means a greater loss than anyone can reckon in figures.

II

Well, the farmer counts his sheep, the woman her pieces of money, the father his children, one by one. Who else counts one by one? Listen, little children. God counts us one by one. That is how He counts you, one by one. "It is not the will of your Father who is in heaven that one of these little ones should be lost." Sheep and oxen are of value to the farmer, money is useful to all, children are dear to parents, but nothing is so valuable or so dear as a soul is to God.

The soul of man, woman, or child is the most precious thing in the world. It never loses its worth, for God loves it. All the souls belong to Him, and he keeps strict count of all. You were counted as you came to this church to-day. You saw men outside trying to take the census. They tried, but I doubt if they could count you all. It is quite possible that they missed a few. But you are all counted at home. No one is passed over there. Nor *there* either; no one is passed over up yonder with God. You are not bees in God's swarm, nor wheat-ears in His field, nor drops in His cup. You are not even lambs in His flock; you are His little children, and He knows you every one.

III

He counts you, and He counts upon you. Have you ever thought of that? God means you not only to become good people, but to help Him to make others good.

There are children in every school on whose help the teachers reckon. When they hear that some boys have behaved badly they are sorry, but not surprised. But if the same thing were said of some other boys, the teachers at first would not believe it, and if they were forced to do so they would feel disappointed and hurt, because they had counted on those scholars to set a good example. Why were you born into homes in which God's name is honoured and Jesus Christ loved? Why have you been taught in day school and Sunday school? Why have you had so many books? Why did so many chances fall to your share? Because God means you to become noble, strong Christian men and women. He has trained you, drilled you, and He counts upon you to become good soldiers of Jesus Christ. Don't disappoint Him. Don't disappoint the love that calls you one by one, and counts upon young men.

XXVI

THE WHITE SUNDAY

“To you is the promise, and to your children.”—ACTS ii. 39.

I SUPPOSE you all remember that this Sunday is called Whitsun Day. I do not suppose that you think very much of Whitsun as a day for boys and girls. You think that Christmas Day, when Jesus was born a little babe in Bethlehem, is more of a children's day than Whitsun. Well, but the text which I have just read to you says that Whitsun too is a Sunday for children quite as much as for grown-up people, because the promise of God fulfilled on the first Whitsun Day was, and is still, a promise, not only to men and women, but to children.

Now I want you to listen while I try to tell you what the promise of Whitsun Day is.

You know that you very often find it hard to be good, to obey, and to keep the resolutions that you have made. I am sure you try. I am sure the most careless boy has fits when he tries to be good, when he makes up his mind and sets his teeth quite hard, and screws up himself and says, “Now I will

be a good fellow." But you know the resolutions that children make are very often like the houses they build on the sea-sand in their summer holidays. Some of you go to stay for weeks by the seaside. That is very nice. I should like to go there to-day, or at least to-morrow. Some of you don't go for such a long time, but nearly all, if not all of you, go for a day to the seaside, and the first thing a boy or girl thinks of doing, as a rule, is to build up the sand and make some kind of a house, or a castle, or a wall. You are all builders by the sea, and some of you build very well; but you do not build anything that lasts. That is the trouble with your building, as with the building of a great many other people—it is not made to last. It soon falls of itself, or if it does not, well, the first tide that comes in washes it all away.

Well, is not that the story of most of the good resolutions that you make? They look nice enough while they last. The trouble is that they do not last. A tide comes in—a tide of temper, a tide of feeling, a tide of influences from without comes in, and all these pretty little sandy resolutions are washed clean away. So that I think boys and girls, like grown-up people, feel that on the whole it is pretty hard to be good. Now, why is it hard? I know a little maiden who, when she is asked to do something, will frankly say that she will not do it; and when she is then asked why, she replies quite honestly, "Because I don't want to." Well, now, that is exactly the trouble with us all. If you come to think of it, the reason why you are not a

thoroughly good boy is because you do not want to be—don't want enough, I mean. The reason why you are not a thoroughly good little girl is because you don't want to be. And that is the reason why all people are not as good as they ought to be, because they do not want to be; that is, they do not love being good, they do not love it immensely. If we could only be made to want to be good people, why, we should be so quite easily.

Now the Whitsun promise is that God, who sets all the commandments for us, will also change the love of our hearts till we shall all want to be good; till we shall love goodness, and love it more than we love anything else.

You know very well that there are certain things which help you to be good children, to keep your resolutions. Sometimes you feel, when you lay down a good book you have been reading, that you are better, that you are stronger, that your resolutions are stronger, because, somehow or other, power has passed into you from the book. Again, if you are near to good people, if a boy is near to another boy who is a really noble fellow, the boy feels that he is all the stronger—power has gone into him.

It used to be said of a Prime Minister that we had here in England once, many years ago, when there was a good deal of trouble and we had a great many enemies, that no soldier ever went in to talk with Mr. Pitt that did not come out ten times braver than he went in. Mr. Pitt himself was so brave, he was so grand and noble, that without meaning it, he somehow or other made other people

feel brave. And so it is with every good boy; he makes the other boys that come near him feel better, feel stronger for good. But we cannot always be reading books, and we cannot always even be near good people; but God promises, and on Whitsun Day He fulfilled the promise, that He would send into the world the Holy Spirit to be near every man and every woman and every child, and to help them all, to make them strong for goodness, to help them to love goodness and to hate badness, so that instead of finding it frightfully hard to be good they should find it easy, find it delightful, find pleasure in it, and, instead of saying, as they do say too often, "I do not want to," the cry of their hearts should be, "O God, I do so want to keep Thy law."

And this is what Whitsun Day means for you, children. Don't simply try, but ask God to help you. Believe that there is in the world to-day the Spirit of God, who, if you ask Him, will make you *want* to be good children.

There is a boy, for instance, that has taken to swearing. Now there is nothing in the world harder to break off than the habit of swearing, and if he goes on with that habit he will find it harder and harder when, by and by, he wants to leave it off. Well, what is that boy to do? He is not simply to try to leave it off, but he is to remember Whitsun Day, and to ask God, "O God, keep Thy promise; help me, make me strong to leave off swearing." Pray like that.

There is a little girl, we will say, who has taken

to telling fibs. You know what a fib is ; it is a baby lie. If a fib is allowed to grow it will grow up to be a big lie, and fibbing—telling little white lies—is a habit that grows frightfully. What is to be done ? Remember Whitsun Day. Don't simply try ; pray, say, " O God, keep Thy promise, and make me strong always to tell the truth."

There is a boy who has taken to bad language ; let him do the same thing. Here is a girl who is becoming very vain, loving all sorts of silly trinkets, thinking herself very fine because she is finely dressed. I saw a peacock the other day. Well, while the thing was perfectly quiet it looked very pretty indeed, but the silly thing would not be quiet, and he thought he would fly. Dear me, how ugly he looked. And then he thought he would sing. Oh, how horrible ! I had to stop my ears. And then there came a little bird that could fly beautifully ; he could sing, too, like one of God's angels ; and I thought how much better to be a plain feathered thrush with a sweet voice than a peacock with all his fine coat and no song. Little girls, love the truly fine things, the ornaments of a quiet spirit. Don't love the gold and fine feathers that silly people love. Ask God to take that spirit out of you, so that you may grow up wise and good women, and help to make the nation better.

That is Whitsun Day. The promise is that God not only sets commandments, but He gives power to keep them. And now do you know why Whitsun Day was called Whitsun Day ? Well, because in the ancient times, long, long ago, there used to be

such a lot of young people that came to claim God's promise, to be baptized and to join the Church, and they came all clothed in white garments, so that, seeing in town and country such crowds of young people who wanted to follow Christ that the whole country seemed to be white with them, people called it White Sunday.

There is a great deal of white about now. It is beautiful out in the country to see the hedges all white with the lovely snow of summer. But it would make London and the country look whiter and still more beautiful if you young people, boys and girls, turned to God for His promise, and became followers of Jesus Christ. That would be whiter than the hawthorn on the hedge, fairer than all the beauty of the world.

Pray God, then, on this Whitsun Day, that the beauty of the Lord our God be upon us.

May God bless you, for His name's sake. Amen.

XXVII

“DENNOCH!”

“Nevertheless not as I will, but as Thou wilt.”—MATTHEW xxvi. 39.

“**D**ENNOCH” is a German word, which the German Emperor, who is a very clever and determined man, said a little while ago is the motto of his life. “But we do not understand German,” perhaps you will say. Well, but I can tell you what this one German word means, and perhaps you will remember the lesson I want to leave with you all the better because it begins with this strange word. “Dennoch” means “nevertheless.” “Still,” you say, “we can see no sense in taking that for a motto. What does it mean?” Well, it means the temper of going on with things, of finishing what you begin, of never giving up because you fail at first and have hard luck for a while. “Nevertheless” is the word of brave, strong, determined people, who, in spite of difficulties, keep pegging away till the work is done.

I

For instance, one boy, after a little bit of hard work, says, “Oh, I can’t do it,” and gives up the

attempt then and there. Now, let me tell you this, children, if you get into the habit of giving up easily you will never do anything. Your whole life will be a jumble of odds and ends, with not a single fine or finished thing in the whole of it. The right thing to say is, “This is a hard job; it is harder than I thought it would be; *dennoch*—nevertheless—I said I would do it, and I will do it.” That is the temper of success in all things.

II

Or again. Here is a girl who tries for a while and fails. She gives up, and says, “Well, I don’t care.” Is that right? No, far from right. She ought to care, and most likely she does care; for I think the don’t-care boy or girl is always a bit of a brag. The right temper when you fail is the temper that says, “I am sorry I failed that time. I did want to succeed very much. *Dennoch!* I won’t be beaten; I’ll have another try at it.” That is how men get “way” on themselves, so that they go through difficulties as a ship goes through the sea. Remember this, then, children, get into the habit of succeeding, get up determination. Whatever you set your hand to, do it with all your might.

III

Do you know the boy who, after trying to do a thing, gives up and says, “Pooh! it’s not worth

while"? I call him the "sour-grapes boy." Now listen. It is always worth your while to do what you said you would do. I mean, of course, if the thing itself was a right thing. Did you ever read of the lad who, in trying to climb a tree, fell and broke his leg, and then when he got well went straight to that tree, climbed as far as he wanted, and called to his mother that she might see he had done it? Now I don't say that he was right in his action, and I have no doubt his mother gave him a bad quarter of an hour when he came down. But he had the true temper of getting on. He was a boy of the right stamp, as I think you will all admit, when I say that his name was David Livingstone. It is bad to have bits and ravellings in one's life. We ought to keep our promises to ourselves. That is what Shakespeare means when he says—

"This above all, to thine own self be true,
And it must follow as the night the day,
Thou canst not then be false to any man."

"Dennoch!" Go on with things. Finish what you begin.

IV

Especially keep your promise to God. Go on with that at all costs. Do you remember what happened in Gethsemane on the night before Jesus was crucified? You had better read it again to refresh your memories of that great scene. Things were very hard for Jesus that night. He suffered

more than we can ever know, for, as you sing in your hymn,

“We may not know, we cannot tell,
What pains He had to bear.”

He too felt it all very, very deeply. If it were possible, He would have wished not to go on with it, but He had promised to do God’s will, and so He said, “Nevertheless . . . as Thou wilt,” and He obeyed unto death, even the death of the cross!

Well, Jesus is our example. As He kept His promise to God, so must we keep our promises. When you make a resolution to conquer some bad habit, that is a promise to God, and you must keep it. No doubt you will find it hard at times, you will be tempted to give up, but you must not give up. Say like Jesus, “Nevertheless,” and ask God to help you, and He will help you.

XXVIII

TWO FLASH-POINTS

“He that is slow to anger is better than the mighty.”—PROVERBS
xvi. 32.

YOU remember that the Old Testament was written in a language called Hebrew, and in Hebrew, to be angry means to be hot, to burn, to flash, to flame. Just as in English, for instance, we speak of people having heated words, or a hot argument; or just as one boy talks of “giving it hot” to another boy. To be angry, then, means to be hot, to burn.

Well, now, some people burn very readily. Just as there are some things that are set in a blaze quickly, so there are some people that go off quickly. Other things you cannot burn so quickly, so there are other people that are more slow to anger. People, it seems to me, are very much like the various oils that we use and read of. There are some oils that go off, that explode very readily; a very low degree of heat will set them off. They have only to be brought near a fire and there is an explosion. Now what people say of an oil like that is that it has a low flash-point. You only have to bring it near to

a low degree of fire and it flashes. That kind of oil is very dangerous. You can scarcely take up a morning or an evening paper without reading of some man or woman, or group of careless little children, being killed somewhere in the world because they have played with or used oil that had a low flash-point.

Then again, there is another kind of oil that will stand a greater degree of heat without going off. That oil is said to have a high flash-point. But there is another kind of oil, again, that will stand any degree of heat without going off. It will only burn brightly and give a clear light like the olive oil in the lamps of the temple of God—no flash-point at all.

Well, now, don't you think that some young people are very much like those oils? *Of course* I am not speaking of you, but we will talk of people that we know. Do you not know of some children that have a very low flash-point? Do you not know some boys that are very ready to go off, to explode, to flame out into rough, angry words on the slightest provocation?

There is a character in one of Sir Walter Scott's interesting stories, I think he was called Sir Percy Bodkin, but at anyrate he had such a low flash-point that, however quiet and gentle he might be, you had only to mention the word "bodkin," or, if you had one on you to show it to him, and off he went; there was an explosion in a moment, you could set him off in an instant. Well, don't you know some boys like that? You have only just got to say one word, and immediately there is a roar.

There are some girls too who become angry in a moment. They have only got to be crossed in the slightest thing, and lo, the petroleum has come near the fire, and there is a flash. They have a low flash-point.

Now some young people think it rather fine to show off in that kind of way. They think it shows a proper spirit, never to allow anything to be said to them, or any joke made at their expense, without immediately showing temper. That is supposed to show a fine spirit. It is exactly the reverse.

Going back to the oil, I find that it is only crude, coarse, impure, and poor oil that has a low flash-point. It is because it is so bad and cheap that it is so dangerous. It does not cost much in money, but the cost is made up in lives lost by it. The poorer the oil, the readier it is to explode. The better the oil, the more refined it is, the higher the flash-point, and higher still it does not flash at all, but burns with a clear and steady light; and it is only the poor, crude, unrefined, coarse, worthless element in a lad that makes him go off in explosions of anger.

There is a character in the Old Testament named Nabal. Well, Nabal was once in very great danger. David was coming against him with some soldiers, and Nabal's servant dared not tell him, and the servant had to go and tell Abigail, the wife. Now, why did he tell the wife instead of the master? Well, he gave the reason. He said that his master Nabal was such a man that one dare not speak to him. He had a low flash-point. The servant was

afraid to say anything to him. When he had anything unpleasant to say to him, he had to tell it to the mistress, because the master was so explosive. Well, did the servant think his master a fine, noble spirit? Oh no. This was what he said. The master was such a *worthless fellow that one dared not speak to him*. It was a coarse, cheap, poor thing even in the servant's sight, that the master should have such a low flash-point. Be sure it is nothing fine in you that makes you hot-tempered; it is the crudeness of your nature, that which is cheap and nasty, which makes you so dangerous to one another.

Those things have to be watched very carefully, because of their low flash-point.

In a dynamite factory there is one man, a shrewd man, who has got nothing to do but just to watch the thermometer, to see if the air is getting too hot. If he sees the air is getting a little wee bit hotter, he has to give warning, and everyone has to run out of the place, because there is danger of explosion. Have you not seen a mother watching the thermometer? She has had a lot of worry with the baby, then you have come in wishing to fondle and play with the baby; but the mother says, "Hush! he is so cross to-day." That is all very well with the baby, but it is pitiable to see a father or a mother watching, like the man of the dynamite factory watching the thermometer, for fear some boy or girl should go off. If that were carried out into manhood or womanhood, it would be awful. Be careful of your flash-point. Do not be proud of your temper.

Remember it is the crude, coarse, unrefined oil in you that takes fire.

And I now read that the people who have to do with oils are trying very much to get Parliament to pass laws to raise the flash-point: to make it a law that no very coarse oil shall be put on the market at all, in order to avoid the danger of explosions. It would be a capital thing if a clause could be put in that Act of Parliament that would apply not only to oils, but to human hearts.

Let us try—I mean the young people—let us all who are younger try to raise the flash-point; let us try to get rid of whatever is coarse, crude, and poor in our natures. Let us try to cleanse our hearts and thoughts till we rise from a low to a high flash-point, and from a high flash-point to that higher still, when there shall be no explosions, or coarseness, or vulgarity, or abuse, or anger; when each human soul shall burn bright, like a lamp in the temple of God. “He that is slow to anger is better than the mighty; and he that ruleth his spirit than he that taketh a city.”

XXIX

NAGGING

“He that covereth a transgression”—(transgression means a fault or a sin; anything that is wrong)—“he that covereth a transgression seeketh love: but he that harpeth on a matter separateth friends.”—**PROVERBS xvii. 9.**

NOW you see there are two sides to this text; one half of it is very bright and beautiful, and the other half is dark and gloomy. I will take the dark side first, in order that we may end with the bright one.

“He that harpeth on a matter separateth chief friends.” Now what does that mean? You have all seen a harp. You have seen it perhaps out in the street, or in a shop window, or it may be in your own house. You know how it is played. A man touches the strings with his fingers, and runs his hand over them. A harp, too, is very sweet-toned. But supposing a man with a harp went on just touching the same string, the same note, you could not stand it; you would put your fingers to your ears, or you would beg the man to stop. Now when we say that someone harps on a thing, what we mean is that he keeps on and on and on at

the same thing. A violin is a very beautiful instrument, and very sweet music can be got out of it. Perhaps no instrument can give out such a wonderful variety of sweet tones as the violin. But I have read of a man getting another into his room, locking the door, and taking up his violin, and just playing on one string, on one note, on and on and on and on, until the whole room seemed to buzz with that one note, and he had reduced this poor man whom he had locked up in his room to a state bordering on frenzy. If the thing had gone on much longer he would have driven him mad. Now he was harping on one note. That is exactly what the text means. "He that harpeth on a matter separateth friends," that is, those even that love him will have nothing to do with him because he keeps on and on and on about a thing.

But there is another word which perhaps you will understand better than harp. Have you ever heard the words "nag" and "nagging"? You know what "nagging" means better than I can tell you. That is the meaning of the text. He that nags keeps on strum, strum, strumming on one thing. Everybody gets tired of it. The harp's tone is sweet, but there is nothing sweet about anyone that nags. As a rule, whoever nags whines, and I do not know that there is a more wicked sound in the world than a whine. It is very wicked to swear, but I doubt if it is much wickeder than to whine. To me the grinding of a saw is horrible, and the scratching of a pencil on a slate is terrible; but it is music compared to a whine—a nasty, long-drawn-out, nagging sound.

I

Well, now, children, avoid this unpleasant habit of harping and nagging. To begin with, try not to be little bores.

There was a painter once who could paint red lions better than any other painter, but he could not paint anything else. Whenever he was asked to paint a picture it always turned out a red lion. People, of course, got tired of red lions. So if you keep on about the same thing people will get tired of you. Boys and girls, for example, are very fond of jokes, but a joke that is kept up too long becomes offensive. Never suck a joke till it becomes dry, till it becomes bitter. Take your laugh and leave it. Do not harp on it. You may make harmless fun about some odd habit in another boy, but do not keep on about it; do not keep strumming on that note, or people will get very tired of you. The same thing is true of complaints. You may have hurt your finger, or you may have the toothache or the earache; it may be really very bad, though of course it is never quite so bad as you say. Well, if you have got something the matter with you say so, but do not "keep on." If you do, you will lose all sympathy. People will say, "That child harps so."

Then again, as to offences. If anyone has done anything against you, well, then, complain of it; scold if a scolding is needed and deserved; but when you have done it have done with it: do not keep on about it. If someone sins against you at breakfast, say so; say it out! but when you have

said it have done with it ; do not bring it up again cold at dinner, nor hash it up for supper. That is nagging. Scolding is often good, but if you carry it beyond a certain point it ceases to be good ; it kicks back at you. Say whatever you have to say always in an honest, outspoken way, and then have done with it. There are many strings to the harp. Do not go strum, strum, strumming on the same string, else people will hate you, and run from you as from a bad smell, fly from you as from a fever. Do not harp ; do not nag. Now that is quite plain. Remember it ; never forget it, then.

II

Then there is the bright side of things. "He that covereth a transgression"—that is, forgives a sin ; the child that makes up and makes friends with one who has offended him—"he seeketh after love." That is what he is after. He wants to create love ; he wants to bring love into being ; he wants to spread love so that it shall be everywhere, like summer sunshine. He is like God in that. God forgives sin in order that there may be love. God is at the head of a very large and a very difficult family. God's children are constantly falling out amongst themselves and doing wrong, and if God did not forgive and forget there would never be any peace for Him nor for anyone else. But He forgives because He is always seeking after love. Do you, little children, seek after love ? Seek to show it, seek to win it, seek to set it up ; make

it your chief quest in life, for love pays all scores. It is worth whatever it costs. You can never pay too much for it. It is the pearl of great price. It is worth giving everything for, and at whatever price you get it, if you get love you have got a good bargain. Little children, seek after love ; seek after gentleness ; seek to curb your tempers ; seek to chasten your little tongues ; keep all that is bad and wild and rude in you under. Seek, like God, after love, and life will be bright about you. The brightness will grow like a lovely summer day, and the birds will sing for you, and the flowers will blow for you ; the whole world will be beautiful, and you yourselves amongst the most beautiful things in it.

God help you then, first of all, not to harp, not to nag. God help you to forgive, to be gentle and kind and loving like Himself.

XXX

BULLYING

“And the child grew, and was weaned : and Abraham made a great feast on the day that Isaac was weaned, and Sarah saw the son of Hagar the Egyptian, mocking.”—GENESIS xxi. 8, 9.

HOW very old, and yet how new and fresh the Bible is. Here, for instance, is a very painful thing that took place thousands of years ago, in the household of Abraham. Abraham had two sons. One was small and weak, the other was big and strong ; and the mother of the little one, on the day of the feast, caught the big one bullying the little one—mocking him, making fun of him, worrying him, holding him up to ridicule. She was, of course, greatly pained. All the joy and pleasure of the feast was spoiled for Sarah, because Ishmael bullied Isaac.

Now four thousand years is a long time, but bullying still goes on in a great many homes, in a great many schools, and on many playgrounds. Ishmael the strong is still found worrying, teasing, mocking Isaac the weak.

We read not long ago a very sad story in the papers of how a grown lad in one of our public

schools was bullied and worried till he threw himself beneath a train and was killed. Life had been made unendurable to him; he had been mocked to madness.

The bully very often works upon some bodily defect of a boy or girl—a lameness, a limp, a stammer, something in the look, something it may be in the colour of the hair, something of which the other is painfully conscious, and has often grieved about. That is seized by the bully and made fun of, held up to ridicule, drawing his coarse fun from the pain of another. It was so in the old Bible times.

You remember the story of the prophet Elisha going up the hill very slowly, well knowing that he was no longer young, and that he no longer had the grand crown of hair he once had. Well, the children came out and cried, "Go up, thou bald-head." Poor old Elisha knew only too well that he was bald, but the children worried him, teased him, and mocked him because he was old and feeble. Sometimes, too, it is the poverty of the child shown in his clothing, or in the scanty amount of pocket-money he has. Often, too, it is the child's goodness, his purity, truth, modesty, peaceableness.

Mr. Gladstone, when he was a boy at Eton, was worried and bullied simply because he was clean-mouthed, because he would not join the unclean jests of some of the others. And very often a boy has still to suffer mocking for no other reason than that he is trying to obey his father and mother, and be loyal to his own conscience and to his God.

These, then, are some of the things that the Ishmaels of our classes, schools, and playgrounds seize upon. Now, of course, many feel that there is a great deal of fun to be got out of bullying and teasing, but I want you to see the matter from another angle. I want you to see how unspeakably *mean* it is. Let me use your own words. I want you to see what an utter *cad* a bully is. Have you watched a horse during the hot summer days? It cannot stand still for a moment. Why? I will tell you. It is being worried by the flies, and you know that a fly always tries to come down on any sore place on a horse; it pounces on a wound. Now, don't you think there is something very mean in that—coming down on a sore place? Well, that is exactly what you do when you bully; when you worry at the dinner-table, tease at the tea-table, or mock on the playground. Some boys and girls think it very smart to tease. Indeed, smartness is one of the diseases of the children of to-day. But do not try to be smart; try to be kind, try to be gentle. Do not be one of those little gadflies buzzing around, trying to find a sore place on someone in order to get a little coarse fun by adding pain to pain.

The effect of bullying and worrying may be seen right through a man's life. I do not know whether it was because of Ishmael's bullying, but Isaac was timid to the last. There was something weak and nervous about him. He always gave way to the very last. Perhaps that was not altogether Ishmael's fault, but I think it was partly due to him.

I will tell you of another who became a great man, a man of whom you have read in history. I mean Sir Robert Peel, one of the Queen's great Prime Ministers, who gave the people cheap bread. Now Sir Robert Peel could never go into a room without a look of nervousness, without trembling; he could not even look people in the face; and when he was in the presence of the King he was like a nervous, awkward country lad, not knowing what to do with his hands, shuffling his feet about in a very curious and painful way. Why? Well, because he had been so worried and bullied as a boy at Harrow School. He was awkward and timid from the first; his schoolmates fastened on to some little odd ways he had, and so teased and mocked him that this mockery sank into his very soul, so that to his last day he could not get over it.

There are many men like him. They are shy, and timid, and awkward because of the cruelty of the lads with whom they played and went to school at first. Seeing, then, that things you do to children of your own age are things that will remain in them and with them to the very end of their lives, I beg of you, children, learn to reverence human nature. Conquer your desire to win applause by saying unkind things. It is said that Burns, at one time of his life, was very fond of saying smart and cutting things, and that for every joke he made he lost ten friends. Well, that is much too dear; a laugh is not worth a friend. When you haven't anything kind to say, say nothing. Let there be a kindly silence when there cannot be a kindly speech.

You have, I am sure, heard of the snapping turtle, so called because it has a habit of snapping at everything that comes in its way. Well, that is not a very nice habit, nor is the name a very pleasant one either, and I want you not to be known as "snapping turtles," snapping boys and girls, always saying the bitterest and unkindest things you can. Follow the Lord Jesus Christ, of whom it was said, when He was a boy, that "He grew in stature, and in *favour* with God and man." He was a kindly, nice boy, and everyone in the village loved Him. Will you try to be like Him?

XXXI

THE LANGUAGE OF FLOWERS

“He hath made everything beautiful in its time.”—ECCLESIASTES
iii. 11.

A FLOWER SERVICE

GOD, I think, must love flowers; He makes so many of them, and puts so many where only He Himself can see them. He strews the fields with flowers. They grow by the wayside and on the hillside too. They climb great mountains, right up to the snow-line. They creep over sand-hills to the very edge of the sea. When God built a house for Himself in the wilderness, He bade Moses make it beautiful with imitations of flowers in wood and gold. Jesus, too, you remember, spoke kindly and often of the flowers of the field, and said that King Solomon, in all his glory, was not clothed as God clothes a lily. Yes, I think it is quite plain that God loves flowers.

Well, now, then, what do the flowers mean? They mean something. You who have brought these lovely things here in order to send them on to the sick children in the hospital—you mean something by your gifts. They will mean a great deal to the

little ones on their beds. Oh yes! you may be sure that these flowers will have a language to-morrow, when the nurses divide them—one to this boy, one to that girl. They will speak in the hospital. But have they nothing to say to you? Cannot we get something out of them before they leave us for ever.

I

Here is the poorest, commonest, cheapest bunch of all. It was gathered haphazard for me half an hour ago in a field. Look at it. Here are daisies, buttercups, fool's parsley, clover, knapweed, forget-me-nots, and a spear of feathery grass. Nothing could be commoner. They are flowers of the field. You have brought flowers of the garden and the hothouse; your flowers have had great care taken of them. They had fires to warm the air in cold weather; walls and roofs sheltered them from wind and rain; when they were thirsty you took them water. But my poor little bunch had no roof but the sky, no warmth but the sun's, no water but dew and rain. No man thought of them, or cared in the least about them, and yet you see each one is beautiful by itself, and altogether make a pretty little posy.

He hath made *everything* beautiful in its time. That is what my little bunch is saying to us. The commonest flower does not want for loveliness, and surely, then, no life of boy or of girl need lack for grace and charm. If God makes the little flowers of the field and the hedges beautiful in colour and

sweet in smell, how much more will He make you beautiful in character, gracious in speech, tender in deed, and lovely in all things.

A boy may be poor, but he need not, therefore, be poor in goodness. Jesus was poor. He was poorer, most likely, than any of you. But He grew in grace, says the Gospel—that means, in beautiful goodness. Grow in grace, little children, grow in grace. Everyone may do that, for God makes everything beautiful.

II

But here is another bunch of flowers. Some are white, others are dark red. You call them carnations. In my country we used to call them cloves, because the chief thing about these is not their colour, but their sweet smell. They give themselves so freely. They stand up in the garden beds and they say to the summer breezes as they pass, "Here, you are going into playrooms, and workrooms, and sickrooms, where the air is hot and heavy, take some of our scent with you to make the air fresh and sweet." The rose on her stalk hears them and says, "Yes, take some of my scent too." "And mine," cries the geranium. "Mine as well, if you please," says the honeysuckle, peeping in over the wall. "Yes, yes," answers the breeze, "I'll gather all your gifts," and by and by it sends gusts of scent in at every open window, and people say, "What a lovely breeze."

Well, now, what is a beautiful life but a life full of love, a life that gives itself in kind words and

kind deeds? Was not love the beauty of Christ's life? He gave Himself as the flowers give themselves, simply, freely, and always. These flowers, when they get to the hospital, will begin at once to give themselves. They won't lose a moment. The moment a sick child holds the bunch to his face he will feel the flowers giving themselves to him, and he will say, "Ah, how lovely." Yes, love is loveliness. Grow, then, in *love*, for love is the beauty of life.

III

Once more: look at this rose. You see it is fading fast. See its petals fall away. I can almost blow them away with my breath. There! they have all fallen off! But why bring a poor, faded rose to the flower service? Well, because it has a message to us all—a very serious one. "He hath made everything beautiful in its time," says the text, and "The time is very short," says my faded rose. Yes, children, childhood is short, youth is short, life is short. Remember that. Don't let it make you sad, but let it make you diligent. Don't waste time; time is the staff of life, and time is short. Make the very best of your time. Use every chance. Take hold of every opportunity. And then what? Must we too fall to pieces like the faded rose? No! God, our Father, will then give us, in Jesus Christ, "an inheritance that fadeth not away." Let us then use time wisely and well, so that we miss not the gift of God, which is life eternal.

XXXII

CONSIDER THE LILIES

“Jesus said, Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow ; they toil not, neither do they spin.”—MATTHEW vi. 28.

“**C**ONSIDER the lilies of the field.” What kind of flowers did Jesus Christ mean? He did not mean any particular kind of flower. He meant all sorts of flowers. By the word lily is here meant all sorts of wild flowers—primroses, bluebells, snowdrops, anemones—anything, everything that grows upon the face of the earth, and makes the world fresh and sweet and wonderful. These beautiful things grow everywhere. They grow under thorn-bushes; they grow up from the mud; they grow in among the corn and the hay. They are to be found upon the ledges of rocks, upon the sides of mountains, and even on the mountain tops. You will find them growing on sand-banks, all over the wide, wide world, the lilies of Jesus, the wild flowers; not any particular flower, but all kinds of flowers; so that the text means all those wild flowers, the sweet, beautiful things that nobody takes any care of, which yet help to make the world so sweet and wonderful.

Now what does Jesus want us to do with regard to these wild flowers? To think about them. A flower gives pleasure to man and boy. We can all see that they are beautiful, these wild things; but they are not only beautiful—they have a meaning, they have a message, they stand for some truth, they have something to say to us; and what Jesus wants us to do is, not only to enjoy their beauty and their freshness, but to take their meaning from them, to take their message, to hear what the wild flowers are saying. Think, He says, listen with your mind, that you may hear the message from the wild flowers of the world.

Well, now, if we listen to the wild flowers on a summer morning, what shall we hear? What do the flowers say to us? Well, it seems to me as I listen, that the first thing that all the flowers of the world say is just one short word—one word, and yet one of the greatest—God. That is what Jesus heard them say. They said God. When He went into the din of big cities it seemed as if He could not hear that word. He heard man, and sin, and death, and sorrow; but when He went out to the country, and stood on the hillside, the flowers came and whispered "God" to Him. That is the word He heard. This was God's work. These flowers that no man had cared for, God had cared for; God had thought out the pattern of them; God had wrought them, designed them; had seen they had enough dew and enough sunshine. God made them beautiful, so that the first word Jesus heard the wild flowers say was God. And that is what they say to

us if we only listen. All the fair, sweet, fresh, beautiful things of the world, they preach to us that same word, God. Only God could make them, only God could think of making them; only God could think of putting them in any place where men could see them. He who is so rich, so kind, and fond of doing kindly and beautiful things, only God makes the wild flowers.

Children, try to remember you are in a world made by God. God is still busy with it. Do not think God is enthroned up in the blue sky, in some town with some angels around Him. God is here: God is here. He has been along these roads; He has been on these commons, in these fields. You live, and move, and have your being in God; and everything in this world says to you this morning, God is here.

Learn to be reverent, then; do not think God is far away, that He cannot see and hear you. Do not take His name in vain, do not use bad language; you are in a temple. All the world is a temple, every bit of earth is sacred. God is near you. Remember that. Consider the wild flowers, what do they say? They say, God made us, and God is near to you.

But let us listen again, and what do they say? They say, *law*. First of all they say God, and then they speak to us of God's law. Jesus Christ speaks in this text as if He were filled with wonder. He says, Consider the wild flowers, how they grow. Oh, the wonder of it seemed to touch Jesus Himself. How they grow! He says, as if He were astonished

that they should grow. They do not toil, they do not spin ; and yet they grow, and grow beautiful, that not even a king in all his glory can be compared to one of them. How do they do it? Well, they do it this way. They do it by just obeying God's law. If a flower were to break the law of God it would not grow, it would not be beautiful, it would die. They just stand there and take what God gives them, and do what God tells them, and God does all the rest. They grow, and grow beautiful, simply by doing what God tells them.

Well, that is the only way in which you can become good, and sweet, and beautiful souls. Solomon in all his glory, in all his royal clothes, was not to be compared to a lily. But if Solomon had really been a wise man—which he was not ; a really good man—which he was not, there would not have been a lily in all the world to be compared to him. A sweet, obedient, loving, trustful little child is fairer than any flower in all the gardens of the world. A noble, honest, God-fearing man ; a fine, strong, wise, calm, humble woman ; why, there is nothing in all the world so beautiful. How shall we become beautiful, even more beautiful than the flowers? Listen. Seek ye first the righteousness of God. The way to become good is by always trying to do what you know to be right ; that is all you have got to do. You try to say what is true, what is pure, and to do what is right, God will do the rest. You will become more beautiful in character than you dream. People will be filled with joy when they think of you, and see

you, and talk to you. They will say there is not a flower in the world so beautiful as this life, that God has made so sweet. That is the word, little boys and girls, to take home to your hearts this morning. Right—seek ye first the right; always the right at all costs—the right, and God will bless you.

Then there is one other word that the wild flowers seem always to be saying, and it is a word a great many of us want to hear over and over again—Love. They say love. Why does God make these little things so beautiful? They only endure for a day. They are cut down, many of them, before they have come to their full beauty. Why? Simply because God loves them. And the message from the wild flowers is this: If God loves us enough to make us beautiful for one short day, He loves you still more; you are to live for ever, you little boys and girls; you men and women, you are to live for ever. Oh, how God loves you, and what great things He will do for you!

You know when people grow up—perhaps you have heard of it, you children—the worst thing that comes to men and women is not hard work, but care and bother. I hear children say sometimes, Oh, it is such a bother! Well, bother comes to be the great trouble of all grown people.

Did you ever hear a story—a fable it was—of a man who had a wolf perched on his shoulder? He could not get the wolf away. There it was, sometimes biting, always snarling and barking. Oh, he had such a weary life! You say it is not true. Well, it is not quite true in that way. But a lot of

people have got the wolf. Do you know what its name is? Bother—Care. They are afraid of what will happen to them.

Well, the wild flowers send a message to you. They say, Love; trust the Father's love. If you will only let the breath the flowers send with their message play about you, you will kill the wolf.

You boys and girls will go through life having hard work, perhaps—some of you poor and some of you rich; but if you will only take the last message of the wild flowers, and trust in God's love, in the Father's love, you will be happy people, whether rich or poor. You need not be rich in order to be happy; but if you will only live in the trust of God's love, you will not fail to be happy, good people.

“Consider the lilies of the field.” Hear what the wild flowers say. They say God, and Law, and Love.

XXXIII

CAPITAL "I"

"Each one of you saith, I."—I CORINTHIANS i. 12.

I—CAPITAL I—is the shortest word in the whole language, but it is one of the greatest words. For you must not measure words by length. As a rule, the shortest are the greatest words; and although this word is the shortest in the English language, it means more than any other word, except that other short word "GOD."

Now, it is because each one of us says "I," because each one of us has the feeling that we are not simply bodies, but that inside the body there is a self, a something that is no more to be mixed up with the body than with the clothing of the body—it is because each one of you, boys and girls, when you refer to yourselves, say "I," that you are human beings. It is because you say "I" that you differ from, and are greater than, anything else in this whole round world.

A boy creeping up the mountain-side soon becomes invisible. If you take an opera glass you see him like a little moving speck; the mountain is so

big, and he so small. Yes, but he is greater than any mountain. Men can find out all about mountains, but no man can find out all about a single little child that plays at its foot or dabbles in the stream that comes down its side. The child is greater than the mountain, because the mountain is all body. It does not say "I." The child's body is a little tiny thing, but there is a soul, a feeling of self in the child. "Each one of you saith, I."

You will see little babies brought here by and by to be baptized into the name of God. Some of them most likely will be very tiny, very small indeed. As they are at present, they are of no use or value whatever in the world, and yet there is nothing in this world that could buy one of them. There is something sacred about them. You would all feel shocked if anybody did any harm to them. You would be shocked, as you would not be shocked if a blow were given to a beautiful picture, or some crystal vase were smashed to pieces. Now, why should you feel that shock? Well, there is something sacred about the baby, because it is a being that as soon as it begins to speak will say "I." It will feel that it has a self, that it has a soul, an "I" within it.

Now, I want to tell you three things about this capital "I" that is in each one of you.

I

First of all, children, remember this—that it is something in you which will go on and will live for ever.

There was once a great man in Greece, and he was taken by very wicked men and condemned to die. He was made to die by drinking a cup of poison, and when he was in his cell a number of his best friends came to take a last farewell of him, and he talked to them. The jailor brought in the cup, and put it down for him to drink, and he drank it; and while the poison was doing its work, one of the friends said to him, "How and where would you like us to bury you?" And he said, with a twinkle in his eye, "You can bury me wherever you like, if you can catch me." What did he mean? Well, he meant that the "me," the "I," was not that poor body which, in five or ten minutes, would be lying dead before them, which anybody could catch, because it could not move—that body would not be him, HE would have gone. It would be no more himself than the clothes he wore, and so he said, very wittily, "You can bury me as you like, if you can catch ME." But they did not catch him, for when the poison had done its work the poor old clay body simply fell down to the earth whence it came, but the man—the "I"—in Socrates went up on angels' wings, and has lived with God ever since, and always will live.

You know when Jesus Christ was stretched on the cross, hands and feet nailed there, there was on one side of Him a thief, also nailed to the cross, and Jesus said to this thief, "This day thou shalt be with Me in paradise." As far as their bodies were concerned, they would be buried—that very night each one of them would be in his grave. But Jesus

Christ meant that the "I" in Him and the "I" in the other would travel very quickly, and be at home in God's great heaven ere the night fell.

Now, remember, boys and girls, there is the same thing in you that there was in Socrates, that nobody will ever catch. There is the same thing in you that there was in Jesus Christ—the "Me," the soul-life that can never die. The sun that shines upon us this bright October morning will go out like a smoky candle; the evening star shall be like a lamp that has burned out its oil; but the selves in you, they will go on burning for ever like God Himself. Each one of you saith "I"—each one of you shall live.

II

Now, another thing I want to say is this, that of all the things you have you ought to take the greatest care of this—this self, this soul of yours; this thing in you that thinks, and knows, and wills, and loves. Take care of everything, be careless of nothing. Be careful of your clothing. Jesus Christ was very careful; He had the habit of tidiness. Some people think it fine to be slovenly, but it is not. The best men are tidy as well as great. Jesus Christ folded up the graveclothes in the grave before getting out of it on the morning of His resurrection. He loved to do things neatly, and to leave even the grave in order behind Him.

Be careful of your body, be careful of your health, but, above everything, children, be careful of the "I," the self, the soul. Do not let angry passions tear it.

Do not spoil it by neglect. Think of it; try to make it healthy and strong, and to keep it beautiful; the thing in you that will live as long as God lives.

III

And the third thing I want to say is this: Remember that, as you have souls, so have those about you. Each one saith "I." Each one, every boy with whom you play, every girl in your class has that mysterious, that most wonderful something that shall go on for evermore. Now by this you ought to know how to treat others. You do not like being spoken to rudely and crossly, do you? Nor does anybody else. You do not like having fun made of you; you do not like ingratitude, nor does anybody else. Do unto others as you would have others do unto you. Above everything, do not harm the self in anybody. Children tempt each other sometimes, I am afraid very often; and it is very hard for men and women to get over the things they are tempted to do and tempted to learn in boyhood and girlhood.

I was reading in an old book the other day, by a very good old man, and do you know what he said? He said that he remembered in his old age—he could not forget it—a wicked jest that he had heard when he was a boy, and he said, "What a number of good things I have forgotten, but that old bad word, that clings to me." Now what a fearful wickedness it was for anybody else to shut a thing like that into a soul, so that, like a fly in amber, it stuck there all through a lifetime.

Little children, remember this: you are wonderfully and fearfully made. Take great care of your souls, and respect the souls of those who are around you. Try to go through this world doing as much good as you can, and doing as little evil as you can; for the result of the good you do will never die, and perhaps the results of the evil you do may live on for thousands of years. Each one of you saith "I," remember that.

XXXIV

JESUS CHRIST'S HOLIDAY

“And He saith unto them, Come ye yourselves apart into a desert place, and rest a while.”—MARK vi. 31.

I

JESUS CHRIST had a school. In this school there were twelve scholars. They were all grown up. The youngest of the scholars of Jesus was eighteen at the least, and the eldest was about thirty-six when he began going to the school of Jesus—six years older than the Master Himself. But it was a real school for all that—a travelling school. Jesus took His scholars about with Him from place to place to teach them different things. It was a very hard-working school too, and once the scholars got very tired, and the Master said to them, “Come and rest,” that is, He proposed that they should take a holiday, and that they should spend the holiday with Him.

Now I want you, boys and girls, to remember that Jesus Christ is not a hard Master, He is a very kind and gentle Master. He was very kind and thoughtful to everybody that did anything for Him.

He was kind to servants that waited on Him. He was thankful for the smallest service. And I am sure that after He had ridden the ass into Jerusalem He took care it was well treated and well fed. Jesus was not a hard Master. He gave these scholars of His their holiday; and *we* get the best of our holidays from Jesus Christ, for the best of all our days of rest is Sunday, and Sunday is the gift of Christ to the world.

The Emperor of Germany was, the other day, riding down a street in a town on the Continent, and some little witty fellow called out after him, "Hi, Emperor, give us a holiday," and you know there is a boy in every good man's heart, and the boy in the Emperor's heart jumped up at the voice of the other boy, and he laughed and said to him, "All right, we will manage it." He sent round to all the schools in the town, and the next day the boys had a holiday. And I feel sure all the boys in that town thought the Emperor a good and kind man.

But do not forget, you boys and girls, that Jesus Christ has given you the best of all the holidays you have, this day upon which we meet together here. The day when your tasks and lessons are laid aside, a day that should be a time of joyous rest for all men, is the gift of Jesus Christ—the gift of His love.

II

But now, where did Jesus Christ and His school go for their holiday? He said, "Come to the

desert." A desert is a word that has a very dreary sound, but it was not a dreary place. It was just as if someone were to say, "Come to the moors in Yorkshire or Wales." Now the moor—the fine open moor—is a splendid place for a holiday, quiet and bright and roomy; so Jesus said, "We will go to the moors, where the wild flowers are, where the green spring grass is, where the birds are. Come to the moors with Me; we will take a holiday there."

Well, the holidays have come round for all the children once more, and I wonder if you and I, when we get our holidays, could not we manage to do what the disciples, the scholars of Christ did—that is, to take our holidays with Jesus Christ. You know He said, before He left this world, "I am with you all the days," holidays as well as other days. Now, what do you think a holiday with Jesus would mean for us? Well, first of all, it would mean a *holy time*. Holiday really means a holy day; and we may be sure these scholars of Christ, out on the Jewish moors with Jesus, spent a holy time, a glad, pleasant time, but still a holy time. We cannot think of their living with Jesus without a part of every day being spent in prayer, without their thinking about God, without their talking about Him, reading bits of His Word or quoting bits of it. There must have been other things, of course; but we cannot think of people with Jesus out on the moors without their being holy in their holidays.

Well, now, that is one thing we can do. We can

try, even in our days of rest and pleasure, to make our time of pleasure and rest a holy time. It is right to give up many things when you have your holidays, but don't give up the habit of your morning and evening prayer; don't give up the habit of thinking about God the Father; whether your holidays be spent in London or out of London, carry that thought with you; try to remember that, whatever you are doing or not doing, you still have to keep the commandments of God, so that your holidays shall be holy days—days with Jesus Christ.

Then another thing, that holiday with Jesus was a safe holiday. Some people's holidays are not safe. We read of terrible accidents every year, because people are foolish oftentimes and children are venturesome. Then again, some fathers and mothers complain that their children come home from the holidays coarser and rougher and less obedient, less gentle, having learned some evil words, having learned some bad tricks and habits from the companions whom they have met upon their holidays, which have really done them harm, and which take a long time to cure. Their holiday has not been a safe one. But I am sure that the disciples did not learn any evil habits or any bad tricks, they did not come back any coarser or rougher or any less gentle. There was no quarrelling amongst them. They came back better in every sense, better because of their holiday with Jesus Christ. Then again, don't you think it was a very pleasant holiday? I am sure they must have enjoyed it; I am sure they never had anything

like it; I am sure they must have wished for another to come quickly—the holiday with the Master was such a success.

Now, let me tell you this, children, Jesus Christ never spoils anything. Sin spoils everything. If you ever had a holiday spoilt it was not Jesus that spoilt it; it was not the Bible that spoilt it; it was not prayer that spoilt it. Bad temper spoilt it—bad habits, unkindnesses, some little bit of the devil came in to spoil the holiday when it was spoilt; Jesus never spoilt one, and He will not spoil yours. Spend it with Him.

Then I think these disciples, in the last place, remembered that time upon the moors with Jesus Christ, and longed for such another time of rest with Christ, and when He was going away Himself, at last, to heaven, He said a beautiful thing to them. He said, "I go to prepare," make ready, "a place for you, and I will come again, and will take you to Myself, that where I am ye may be also." They should have another rest, another long, long holiday with Jesus Christ after death.

I do not know whether you are very much afraid of dying when you think of it. We most of us are afraid when we think of that, but I want you to remember this, that, for all who believe in Jesus Christ and obey God, dying really means going to keep a holiday with Christ. You know that one-third of all the children born into this world die when they are wee, little things, tiny little babes. Well, they have gone for their holiday, and they keep it with Christ. They make heaven merry. I

should not like a heaven where all the people were grown-up; I should like to have children about me even there. I think they must make the angels quite glad with their funny little ways. Think of them as learning the A B C, or something equal to it, in eternity; learning their first little lessons *there*, and making heaven a home with their prattle. They are quite safe and quite happy. So for you and all of us, if we try to serve God on earth, when the end of life comes, Jesus will say to us, as He did to His scholars of old, "Come ye yourselves apart and rest a while."

May God bless you in Christ's name. Amen.

XXXV

YES!

NOW there are some things which you cannot remember, there are others that you can just call to mind, but there are a few that you could not forget if you tried. Children are good at forgetting. They can, if they try hard, forget almost anything except meal-time and play-time.

Well, now, my text is one of those which you could not forget if you tried—that is, if you will only listen for a moment. When you went to have your portrait taken, the photographer asked you to be still for just one moment. He lifted his hand and said, Now, please! and the thing was done. Well, give me the same chance, one still moment. All of you listen for a moment—"Yes." There, I have got you; you cannot forget my text. "Yes" will stick to you while you live.

Well, but, you say, is that a text at all? Is there anything to be said about such a little common word? Oh yes! Don't you hear? It answers you itself. "Yes" is a splendid little text, so is its brother "No," a grand little fellow, about which I hope to talk to you

some day. But now let me say a few things about Yes.

I

There is a real and there is a false "Yes."

Always be sure that you choose a real "Yes." "Let your yes be yes," said Jesus. There are many imitations. I well remember a boy being sent on an errand to a farmhouse once. It was a fine summer's afternoon; the farmer's wife was busy baking in her big bright kitchen; rows of apple puffs stood on the table, and through the open door the cool, clean dairy, with its great stone troughs full of milk could be plainly seen. She asked the lad wouldn't he like a glass of milk and a tart? He shyly said, "N-n-ooo," and the silly woman thought he meant "no." But he had not said "No" outright, only "N-n-ooo," by which, of course, he meant that he wanted her to ask again or bring him the milk and the tart without any further fuss. But she let him go, and he had not gone far before he fairly broke down and cried.

Who was he? Ah! I would not tell who that boy was for anything, but I know him well, and though it is so long ago, he still is sorry that he missed that tart and glass of milk that stood in the cool dairy that hot day.

Of course, you see the mistake he made. He did not say out what he meant. Learn a lesson from his mistake. When you mean "No," say "No"; when you mean "Yes," say "Yes"; and let your "Yes" be real.

II

Be sure to stick your "Yes" in the right place.

The difference between good and bad people is just this, where the good say "Yes" the bad say "No," and where the bad say "No" the good say "Yes." "Yes" belongs to all things right, honourable, and kind, to all the commandments of God. Whether God in His Word or in your conscience bids you do anything, say "Yes, Lord." But to everything wrong say "No." When you are tempted from within yourself, or from without by others, stick to a good strong "No." Meet the temptation to anger, vanity, revenge, bad deeds, bad words, by "No."

As David put pebbles in his bag and slew Goliath the giant with one of the little smooth stones, carry with you a bag of "No's," and when evil thoughts come, meet them with a good knock-down "No."

III

Learn to say Yes in the right tone.

Yes is a very short word and easily said, yet very often people fail to say it as it ought to be said. Some mutter and mumble, wheeze and cough it, till all its pretty music is lost. Some say "Yes" in so rough a tone that it sounds like "No." Then there is the doubtful "yes," "m-m-yes," the lazy "ye-e-es," and the sighing "yes!!" as if the weight of the whole world lay on that one little child.

The true "yes" has a clear, bright, ringing tone—

the tone of cheerful, willing obedience—the obedience God loves. When you say “Yes,” say it kindly, say it cheerily. Do your duty with a will.

How full of this beautiful “yes” was the life of Jesus. When He was tempted He said, “No! No! No!” He did not sin. But when anyone asked Him for help the answer was always a bright “Yes.” To the blind beggar, to the poor leper, to thousands of sick people, to little children, Jesus said “Yes.” And to us He says “Yes.”

“Finding, following, keeping, struggling,
Is He sure to bless;
Saints, apostles, prophets, martyrs,
Answer ‘Yes.’”

XXXVI

A ROYAL HOUSE

“Whose house are we.”—HEBREWS iii. 6.

“WHOSE house”—that means God’s house. But what is God’s house? A house, in the first place, means a building made with hands where somebody lives. There is no house made with hands in which God lives. There are many very beautiful churches in London, but there is not one of them that can be called the house of God; He does not dwell in houses made with hands. But you have read in your history books of another kind of house—the royal house of Scotland, the house of Hanover, the royal house of France, and so on. Now when you come across such a phrase in your books you know very well that it does not mean a building, but a family, a household. To belong to the royal house of Scotland means to belong, by relationship, to the family reigning over Scotland in ancient times; and to belong to the royal house of France, to the royal house of England, means exactly the same thing.

And that, too, is what it means here. “Whose house are we”: whose family are we—we belong to

the household of God, to the royal house of God, the royalest of all royal houses. But perhaps you will ask, What does *that* mean? Who are those that belong to the family of God? Well, there are two marks by which everyone may know whether he or she belongs to the royal house of God.

The first is this: that a man or woman, boy or girl, be constantly, seriously striving to do the will of God, to obey God.

Jesus Christ was once preaching in a house, and He was surrounded by a crowd of people who filled the little house, and filled the courtyard and the roadway outside, so that His mother and His brethren, who wanted to see Him, had to send word through the crowd that they were there. Of course they felt that they had a claim upon Him; they felt sure that they had only to say that they were there, and He would come out at once to see them. So somebody came in and said, "Thy mother and Thy brothers without seek Thee." Jesus paused in the middle of His sermon, and He said, "My mother, My brothers, My sisters, who are they?" Ah, that is *our* question, "Who are they?" "Whosoever doeth the will of My Father who is in heaven," He said, "the same is My mother, My brother, My sister." "Whosoever." They all belong, like Me, to the same royal house of God; they are related to Me; we are children of the same Father, heirs of the same Estate.

Now that is the first thing by which children may know whether they belong to the royal house of souls. Are they *trying* to do God's will?

And then there is another mark.

When Jesus Christ was going from this world He called the few disciples that clung to Him, and He gave them a last parting charge, and do you know what it was? He said to them, "*Love one another, even as I have loved you. By this,*" by the love mark, "*shall all men know that ye are My disciples.*" Love to one another; that was to be the mark of a man belonging to the royal house of Jesus.

And these two are the great marks still. First, trying to do right—always trying—not now and then, but set, bent on trying to obey; and then trying to be kind and loving to all; these are the marks of those who belong to the royal house of Jesus.

Once more, how do people get into this household? Well, first of all through baptism. You see little children brought to this church to be baptized. What is the meaning of that? They are being brought into the household of God. But a little child cannot do anything, you say. It does not even understand what is said to it. You sometimes hear the little ones cry, and perhaps you laugh at them. But what does that matter? When a little child is born into a house is he less the child of that house because he does not know it? Is there less care of him? Is there less love shown to him because he yet cannot value it? Not a bit of it. Then again, when a little child is born into a house, it is not only the father and mother that take care of him; the whole State of England looks after that child. He does not know that he is an English boy,

for instance ; he would not salute the Queen if she passed him. He loves his nurse much more than he loves Her Majesty ; thinks more of his father than of any prince. But although he knows nothing about England, yet England, in all her laws, has to look after the little citizen. Her policemen have to guard him ; her soldiers have to protect him ; all the laws have to shelter the helpless little fellow from harm.

And so with regard to the Church. The family of God's grown-up children—His sons and daughters—they also say, "This little fellow belongs not only to the house, not only to the State, he belongs to *us*. Bring him here ; we feel an interest in him ; we know he has in him something that will live when the sun and moon have gone out." And so through baptism first the little child is brought into the household of God.

But that is not enough. The Prodigal Son was a child ; but when he grew up to be a man he refused to be a member of the father's household. He went away, became a bad boy, and it was not until many years had passed, and much trouble had rolled over him, that his heart turned home again, and he came back and was willing to become a loving, obedient son, a member of the household. And so when children who have been baptized grow up—when they come to twelve, or thirteen, or fourteen—we expect that they too will do something of themselves ; that they will say, "As we were brought in baptism into the house of God, so now of ourselves we come ; we believe in Jesus, we love God,

and we want to belong to the people that belong to Him." That is the second thing, professing Christ, which means loving Him, and *saying so openly*.

And the third thing is this—being *faithful to the end*. "Whose household are we if we hold fast to the end," *i.e.* not only saying, but sticking to it till death itself.

Now I do not know if I have made it quite plain to you, but I hope I have, and I want you boys and girls who are here to-day to think over this matter very seriously. I have been preaching children's sermons in this church for six years. Now what does that mean? It means, among other things, that a boy who was six years old when I began to preach here is now twelve; that a girl who was eight is now fourteen; and those who were then ten are now sixteen. And I want to know what has become of you, and what have you done with all the preaching and the teaching? Now that you have come to an age when you can think about things for yourselves, what are you going to do? You were baptized; you were brought into the house of God. Now, when are you going to take the next step? When are you coming to tell us, and say, "We believe in Christ, we love God, we want to belong to the people of God; we see the Lord's Supper on the table once every month, and we want to do what Christ told us to do in remembrance of Him"? I want you boys and girls who are no longer little ones to think over this matter, and by the grace of God

to say, "I too, by obedience, by love, by confession of my faith in Christ, please God, will belong to the royal house."

May God bless you and help you, for His name's sake.

XXXVII

GATHERING OR SCATTERING

“He that gathereth not with Me scattereth.”—MATTHEW xii. 30.

IT was a very busy world that Jesus came to. Some men, of course, were lazy, but most of them worked hard. No creature on earth works like man. Shepherds gathered their flocks together at the close of day, and led them back to the fold for rest and safety through the night; fishers were busy gathering pearls; brown-faced harvesters were busy gathering in the wheat and corn before the winter. In towns men were hard at work gathering money together; others quite as busy gathering honours and titles for themselves. But what was Christ's work? What was Jesus gathering?

I

Well, His work was the most wonderful and beautiful of all, for He gathered men and women. He cared for nothing else, but He cared for all sorts of people. If they were good already He made them still better. If they were very wicked He did

not turn them away. If they were hungry He fed them; if sick He made them well. He gathered little children to bless them. Wherever we read of Jesus we find Him gathering people together to do them good. He searched for them as others search for gold, as the shepherd for lost sheep, and He was as glad when He was able to do any good as others were to find money they had lost, or as a father to find a lost child. Jesus, then, was a Gatherer of men and women.

II

Was He quite alone? Did no one help? Oh yes! Jesus had many helpers. Some were boys, some were rich men, some were poor women. A lad gave Him two loaves and five sardines that He might work a miracle with them; one lent Him a boat that He might preach from it; another lent Him a colt that He might ride as King into Jerusalem; another let Him have the loan of a room in his house that He might meet His disciples for the last time; others, again, helped by telling people of Him, and many helped by carrying sick people to Him.

But while Jesus and His band of helpers were busy gathering people together in this way, saving them from hunger, sickness, and from what was worse still, sin, there were some that scattered; they tried to undo what Jesus had done. When they found that Jesus had filled men with good thoughts, they did all they could to scatter these thoughts. They made it harder for people to be good, and

harder for Jesus to help them and make them good. So that while Jesus had some to help Him, He had many that did nothing but hinder.

III

But perhaps you'll say, "That's all over long ago!" Oh no, it is not. If it were, I should not talk to you about it. All this is going on around you to-day. Jesus is still gathering people, still saving them from all sorts of bad things, and a great number of grown folk, and of children too, are gathering with Him. What do you think is the meaning of all the churches, the missions, the societies, the hospitals? Such things were not in the world till Jesus came. They are not found to-day where He is not known. Why, then, are they here? They are here because there are people still who want to help on Christ's work of helping men. A church may be a very dingy building; you may think that missionary books are not always interesting, and collections rather a bother; but if you stop to think what it all means, I believe you will see that it is the most beautiful thing in all the world gathering with Jesus, helping Christ to help men.

But no one hinders Him now? No one takes any pains, surely, to. I wish I could say No! But every wicked person scatters and wastes what Jesus is trying to save, and undoes what Christ or some of His helpers have done. It is often very hard to do good, it is generally very easy to do evil. In an

hour your little dog could tear to tatters books that took great men a lifetime to write, and bad men can often by a word or a sneer scatter the good thoughts or feelings which only Jesus Himself could put into people's minds.

IV

Well, now that we understand, I hope, what Jesus means by gathering and scattering—that is, doing good or doing evil—let me ask you to which of the two bands do you mean to belong? You often think of what you will do for a living; whether you will be a doctor, merchant, shopkeeper, builder, and so on. It is right you should have these thoughts, but I want you also to think of this other matter. There are two bands at work in this world; one is helping to make it better, the other is making it worse. Now you—you boys, you girls—will soon belong to one or the other of these two. You will lighten Christ's task or you will add to it. You will, by words or gifts, or by your own example, help in gathering people out of sin, or by a thoughtless, godless life you will make it harder for those who know you to be good, and harder for Jesus to make them good. Which band will you join?

Will you, first of all, let Jesus gather you? He is calling you to Him. In the Bible, in many a hymn that you sing, in verses that you know by heart, in good books that you read, yes, and in good thoughts that arise in your mind, Jesus is trying to draw you to Himself. Come to Him, children. Stay with Him. Help Him all you can.

"Do all you *can* for Jesus Christ," said a dying lad to his friend. That friend was Robert Morrison, the great missionary. You and I may never be great in anything, but let us do our best—all we *can* for Jesus Christ.

XXXVIII

THE EYE OF THE HEART

“The light that is in thee.”—MATTHEW vi. 23.

JESUS CHRIST says that the lamp of the body is the eye. There is plenty of light in the sky. It comes streaming down from the great sun that God made; but none of it will come to you unless the eye, which is the lamp of your body, be open, and in good working order. If you close your eyes, although you may be standing in the midst of daylight and sunshine, it is all dark to you, and everything is blind—your own hands are blind, your feet are blind, your whole body is blind, if once you close your eyes, the lamps of the body.

But now, cannot you see when your eyes are shut? Just think, little boys and girls, cannot you see when you shut your eyes? For instance, many of you last summer were by the seaside—some for a day, some for a week, some for more—and you enjoyed yourselves very much. Now when you shut your eyes cannot you see the place where you spent your holiday? Just look at it. There is the great plain of brown sand. There are rocks stuck in the sand,

and little warm pools of water around the rocks. Do you see them? What are those things on the rocks? Limpets. Then you see the seaweed, which is down about the bottom of the rock, swaying in the water, and then beyond the sand—cannot you see it?—the sea. Just look at the waves coming, arching their necks like horses, with spray like a mane. They roll close up to your feet, running along here and there in beautiful ripples of white. You can see all that when you shut your eyes. It is not here, it is a hundred miles away perhaps, but you can see it.

Again, supposing I give you a story-book, a wonderful story about boys, a wonderful story about girls—about someone who went out to Africa and hunted lions, and had a very exciting time of it, and you say, "Are there no pictures?" "Oh no," I say, "you must make your pictures as you go along." You say, "I cannot." But try. So you begin reading the book. After you have read it a little bit, and you shut it, you say, "That is a splendid book. I can see the man, I can see the lions, I can see all the scene." How do you see it? By the light that is *in* you. Not by those two eyes, the lamps of the body, but by something that God put in you—the eyes of your heart, the eyes of what we call, in a very big word, your imagination—the light that is *in* you.

Well, now, why did God put that into boys and girls, men and women? Not that they might see where they spend their holidays, not that they may make pictures to their story-books. He gave you that light, He put those eyes into your heart, in

order that you may see the difference between what is right and what is wrong, what is true and what is not true, what is ugly and what is beautiful in conduct. What a terrible thing it would be if God turned us all into this world without any eyes to our bodies. Just think what a terrible thing this world would be for us if we were all blind—a world so full of pitfalls and rocks and stones. We should be always knocking up against things, hurting ourselves, getting killed, and hurting one another, or taking things not good for us. It would be dreadful if we had not got eyes of the body. But ah! what a still more dreadful thing it would be if you had not got light *in* you.

You have heard of people going down in the dead of night, when someone has been ill, to get a bottle of medicine, and, not taking time to light a lamp, but just going forward and taking the first thing that came, and giving it to the sick person. And what was it? Oh, it was poison; and so instead of doing good he did a great harm, perhaps killed someone he loved, because he went about in the dark.

Well, now, unless we had this light in us, we should take things that would kill our soul's life. We should not know the difference between truth, which is food, and untruth, which is poison; good, which is bread, and bad, which is just like a poisoned drink. We should do wrong without knowing it. But God has put light in you. You know when you do wrong, you do not want to be told. How do you know it? By the light in you.

Now, boys and girls, what ought you to do, then?

Well, you ought always to bring your words, and your deeds, and your thoughts, and look at them in the light of the lamp of God that is burning in you. Sometimes I see little people sewing, and they sit a good long way from the light. They are trying to do some very nice needlework. By and by, when they have done a good bit of it, they bring it close to the lamp in order to see if they have done everything right. Now do you bring the way in which you are living quite close to the lamp of God within you? Those words which you boys use, bring them up close to the lamp of God and see are they beautiful and right? Ought English boys, London boys like you, to use words like these? Bring them near the light of God that is in you, and see how ugly they are, and you say, "I must not have anything to do with these." Use the light within you. Sometimes little people say, "But I don't want to do it." Well, bring that feeling to the light, see how ugly selfishness is in a clear light. Use God's light within you, little men and women. Do not let God's lamp burn away within you without making use of it. If you only try to work by the light in you, if you only try to live, to speak and think and act by God's lamp in you, what beautiful lives you will have, and what happy lives they will be, and how much happiness they will cause in others.

Try to use, not only the lamp of the body, but the lamp of God in your heart, that you may live lives pleasing to Him, to yourselves, and to all others.

May God help you, and give you evermore light and grace in His name. Amen.

XXXIX

GOD'S GIFTS

“That Thou givest unto them they gather: Thou openest Thine hand, they are satisfied with good.”—PSALM civ. 28.

HAVE you ever stayed at a farmhouse in the country? If so, you will easily remember a pretty little scene which I have often watched. In the morning, when the horses in the stables and the cattle in the byre have been attended to, when the family have had their breakfast, and the dog, who thinks himself one of the family, has had his share and lies basking and blinking in the sun, the farmer's wife may be seen crossing the yard to the barn, from which she presently comes out with a big bowl full of barley or corn. In a moment all the fowls are running and the ducks are waddling noisily towards her, and gather in an excited crowd around her. Then she throws a handful here and a handful there—you can hear the swish and rattle of the brown grain as it falls—and what she gives they gather down to the last morsel that falls from her hand.

Well, but is not that what is taking place all over the world, morning, noon, and night? This whole

world is God's farm. Everything in it waits on Him for food. On the top of the high hills, in the thick of the jungle, on the broad plains, and down deep below the green waves, among the hills and valleys at the bottom of the sea, are creatures of all sorts, who look to God for their food. He gives and they gather.

What, too, is all man's work, but just gathering what God gives? Men hunt and fish, dig and plough; they burrow in the earth for gold and silver and diamonds. From year's end to year's end, and all over the world, men are busy gathering. But they can only gather what God gives. God has filled the world full of all sorts of good, useful, and beautiful things in order that men, coming after Him as it were, might gather up His gifts. He gives them for men to gather.

Oh, let us thank God, little ones, and love Him with all our hearts for His goodness to us and to all men! Here we are at the end of another year, and all through its months, weeks, days, and hours God has been giving us things. If He did not think of us, if He did not give us air and light and food, we should all at once die. We live because He never forgets us. We are a little part of His great family. He gives and we gather.

II

But do we gather all He gives? The animals take all He gives, for He only gives them food and shelter and the pleasure of living. But He gives

you a great deal more than these things. Do you gather all He gives?

Look at this great Book that lies here open on the pulpit before us all. You know what it is. It is the Bible. It is the best and most wonderful book in the world. It is a world in itself. It is fuller of truth than any field is of wheat, than any mine is of gold, or garden of flowers.

Now God has given this to you. Have you begun to gather it in? I know that you have to read and learn bits for your examinations, but do you ever go into it of your own free will? Have you learnt bits here and there because you felt they were good and true, and because God had given them? You will soon, very soon, be, not children, but young men and women. You will soon be caught in the hurry of life. Many of you will have but very little time to read or learn after you pass your sixteenth year.

Well then, little ones, make use of your childhood; gather what God has given you in the Bible. Fill your memory with great and beautiful texts until you become little living Bibles and have the word of God written in your hearts.

III

But God not only gives us this Book, He gives every one of us good thoughts. Every good and noble thought that comes into your mind comes to you from Him. He sends it. It is His gift to you. Sometimes when you have read about

some good man or woman a thought that was not in the Book flashes into your mind and you say to yourself, "I too will be a good, true man," or "I will try to be a good woman." Well, that thought is God's gift to you. I am sure you have had many such thoughts during the year. Now, did you gather them? Did you take them into your heart? Did you try at once to do what they told you, or did you just let them pass away?

Again, when we do wrong, something within us checks and corrects us. Others may tell us too, but whether they do or not we tell ourselves. "No one will see you," said one boy to another whom he was tempting to steal. "But I can see myself," was the answer. Yes! we all see ourselves, and that is God's gift to us. That little voice within you that warns you when you are about to do wrong is God's gift to you. Never neglect that gift. He gives these thoughts and feelings, and what He gives you should gather.

IV

But the greatest gift of all is Jesus Christ. He calls Himself the Living Bread. You remember how once He fed thousands of people with five little loaves and two fishes. Then, when all had eaten, He told His disciples to gather up the broken pieces of food that lay about on the ground, in order, He said, "that nothing be lost." He had given, and He wanted them to gather all.

Well, children, Jesus Christ is God's great gift. All things are in Him. He is our Saviour, our

Teacher, our Master, our Example, our Friend. Take Him, then, for your Saviour, your Teacher, your Master, Friend, and Example. You like, no doubt, to read pretty stories and sing nice hymns about Jesus. That is very good; but let nothing be lost. All that Jesus did and said was good, and there is a gift from God in it all for you. Gather it, gather it, little ones! Try to live from the first as the children of Jesus should live. At the beginning of the New Year ask yourselves whether you are living as children of Jesus—whether your words are such that you would like Him to hear, your acts such that you would like Him to see. And if you find that already you have begun to go the wrong way, turn back at once. In your prayers tell Jesus that you are very sorry, and that you want to be a better child in the New Year. That will make Him glad. That will be a New Year's gift for Him. Will He care? Oh yes, if you give Him your love. Jesus will gather what you give. He will be happy in your love, and make you happy too.

XL

GOD'S VOICE

“The Lord called Samuel : and he said, Here am I. And he ran unto Eli, and said, Here am I ; for thou calledst me. And he said, I called not ; lie down again. And he went and lay down.”—I SAMUEL iii. 4, 5.

I THINK that this story of the call of young Samuel is one of the most beautiful in all the Bible. The old half-blind priest, the silent Tabernacle, the little lamp glimmering within, the dark night spread over all things without, the young boy fast asleep as only a healthy boy can sleep, then in the stillness a voice calling “Samuel.” You all know the story, you all know whose the voice was that called Samuel that night : it was the voice of God.

But now, when you read this Bible story, what do you think of it ? Do you think it is a rather pretty story of something that happened once, a long, long time ago, but which never happens to anybody now, least of all to boys and girls here in London ? Well, if you think so, let me tell you that you are wrong. God still calls people, and especially does He speak

to children, to thoughtful boys and girls of ten and twelve years of age. He spoke to Joseph, to Samuel, David, Isaiah, and to Jesus Himself, in their boyhood. A boy of ten or twelve, who has not yet had time to forget what his mother has taught him about God, or the lessons he has had in the Sunday school, who prays night and morning as regularly as he eats his food, such a boy or such a girl is the very one to whom God is sure to speak. And He does speak, He does call, He has spoken to you. The thoughts you have about living a good life, the inclination, the leaning of your heart to things that are fine, and pure, and noble, the dislike of all that is false, foul, bad, which rises of itself in your mind, is nothing else but God's voice calling to you as He called to Samuel to leave the bad and follow the good.

II

But when Samuel went to Eli, Eli said, "Go lie down again." He thought the boy was mistaken, or dreaming, or frightened, so he said, "Go to sleep; take no more notice of these thoughts." That was strange, was it not? to bid the boy go to sleep at the moment when God Himself was waking him. But, alas, it is a very common thing. It happens every day.

When some older boy tries to laugh a younger one out of some serious thought, some good habit, shames him out of his good resolution, mocks at him for saying his prayers or going to church, it is

as if he said, "Go lie down again—take no notice of what God says."

Perhaps the boy or girl reads some book that makes a mock of religion, sneers at the Bible, the Sunday. Perhaps it is sin in the child's own heart that says, "Never mind, don't trouble about these serious things, have your own way," or, as Eli said, "Go lie down again, and take no notice."

And very often the boy and girl listen to these other voices. They allow themselves to be laughed out of their good habits, mocked out of praying, sneered out of regard for Sunday. Jesus once told a little story about some wheat which was sown in a rocky part of the field. It shot up very quickly, and promised well at first, but fell away when the weather grew hot, and withered in the sun. I often think of that story or parable when I see boys and girls of twelve, fourteen, and sixteen years of age. At six, eight, and ten, they seem so good and bright. They read Bible stories with delight. They were not in the least bit ashamed of saying that they loved God, and meant when they grew up to follow Jesus Christ and work for Him. Then someone laughed at them, someone mocked; they found that it needed a little courage to follow Jesus, and they fell away—they broke their good resolutions, they turned a deaf ear to God! Is it not very, very sad? when you think of it, can anything be sadder than this? Don't let this happen with you, little ones. Have more courage; what does it matter who laughs at you? If you do what is right, no one can laugh at you for long.

III

SPEAK, LORD, FOR THY SERVANT HEARETH

At last Eli saw who it was that awaked his little friend, and he told Samuel what to say if the voice came again. The voice did come again, and Samuel said, "Speak, Lord, for Thy servant heareth;" and God spoke to him clearly and fully. Now, what does that mean for us who live at this time? Well, it means just this. When you have a thought in your mind which you know to be right, a feeling in your heart which you know to be good, encourage, don't quench it or quash it, act upon it. Obey it, and then it will grow clearer, and will lead in other thoughts like itself, and fill your minds with light and your lives with love. A very wise and great man, who died not long ago, used to say, "Do the duty that lies *nearest*, and that will throw light on the duties that follow."

That is very true. Perhaps all children who read this sermon will not be able to understand that saying. Never mind, I want all to learn it by heart. They will understand it by and by. God calls to us in every duty He sends us. Duty means what we ought to do. Whenever you see something that you ought to do, do it, for it is God's commandment to you; and the more you obey God the more clearly will you hear Him speaking to you in the events of everyday life. That is the pleasure of doing right. One gets to know that God is near. That was the joy of Samuel's life—the joy of all

the good and great men and women that have ever lived.

Now, then, children, remember that God is. He really is. He is in each one of us. He calls and speaks to us. Every good wish, every good thought that comes to us is God's own voice. Never let a good thought pass unnoticed; do what it bids you do, for it is God Himself calling to you. Remember Jesus Christ. He was good in the midst of wickedness. Why? Because He always obeyed His best thoughts, the most unselfish thought that came into His mind. He was happy in the midst of great sorrow and pain. Why? Because He knew that God was near Him. How did He know that? By the good, noble thoughts, desires, and feelings that flowed into His heart. He knew that these were God's voices. Try to be like Him. Yes, that is just the sum of all I want to say to you. Be like Jesus Christ. Copy Him. He listened for God's voice within Him. At twelve years of age He made up His mind to be about His Father's business. He held to that till death. Children, be like Him.

XLI

GOODNESS

“Samuel said unto Jesse, Are here all thy children? And he said, There remaineth yet the youngest.”—I SAMUEL xvi. 11.

BOYS and girls very often make great mistakes about goodness. They are often mistaken as to what goodness is, what it is like, and what it leads to. If you listen you will often hear a boy sneering at another one who is trying to lead a good life, as if goodness were something to be laughed at, something not quite manly, not grand and fine; something puny and weak and despicable. Now goodness is just the purest, finest, best thing in all the wide world, and it is of the very utmost importance that you should not make the slightest mistake with regard to it. And in this little story about David we have four things that ought to help us to correct any mistakes we have fallen into about this subject. Just let me name them:

I

First, David was the youngest in a large family, and yet he was the very best of all. Youngest and

best. Great goodness, then, does not depend on age. It depends on nothing except on the heart—that is, on a boy's or girl's desire to serve God. Youth is an excuse for the absence of many things. You can plead that you are young, that you are too young for some things; but you cannot plead youth as an excuse for wickedness. Character blossoms early. David, the youngest in the family, was the noblest in character. He was not merely good, but, as the Scotch people say, he was fine. There were stronger, taller, perhaps wiser ones than he, but he had the noblest heart, the purest heart. He gave God more pleasure than anybody else.

Now, then, remember that. Don't say that you have got to wait till you are men and women. You can be nobly good even while you remain the youngest in the class or the youngest in the house. You cannot simply be good, but I say you can be nobly, finely, grandly good.

And oh that you children would not be so easily satisfied with goodness! When you bring your school reports home, fathers and mothers take them up and read them. They read, "Latin, fair." Well, it does not matter very much that you should excel in Latin. "Latin, fair," that will do. "Euclid, improving." Well, that is good. "English History, very good." It ought to be so; you ought to know the history of your own country. But I don't care about these other things, so I run down to the bottom of the report. "Conduct excellent." That is what I have been waiting for—"excellent."

A lad may not have the power to be excellent in

Latin ; he may not have the brain power, or he may be pitted against clever boys ; but though he be the youngest in the class, the youngest girl in the class or the youngest boy, when you come to the bottom of the report, where the teacher talks about character, there ought to be for every one of you only one word—excellent, splendid. No excuse for anything less than that. There, each one of us should have the highest number of marks.

II

Then again, the most religious lad in the family was the bravest of the lot. David was not only good, religiously good, he was the bravest, the manliest of all the family.

Now some think that a good boy is a milksop. They speak of a lad who is known to read his Bible, say his prayers morning and evening, as "a ninny," "little mother's boy," or something of that kind. But here was a lad who was religiously the best boy in the house, and the bravest, the manliest fellow too. He kept sheep—that is the lowest thing they could give him to do. But he had an opportunity of showing the strength that was in him. He fought a lion and a bear, and when the time came that the country needed somebody to meet Goliath, it was not the big, strong men that came to the front—Goliath frightened the whole lot of them. It was the best, the most religious, that came forward, and in the strength of his religion fought the giant.

Faith in God helps a boy to be brave, gives him courage, puts good mettle into him, does not take away any manly or boyish qualities. I say goodness is manliness.

III

Then another thing, the youngest boy in the family was the happiest, the most cheerful. I feel sure that if you had known this family, and wanted to make a friend of one of them, or have someone to go with you on a journey, you would say, Well, Eliah, he is a fine strapping fellow, but there is not much in him; I don't want him. Shammah, he looks a fine strong man, but he has not much to say for himself. There is Abinadab, he is dreadfully conceited; I don't want to be shut up for days with a conceited man, who is always thinking and talking about himself. Here, give me this bright, cheerful lad to come with me. He can sing and play his harp if I get into the dumps. He is the best, the wittiest, the best company.

David was then the happiest boy in the family, as well as the most religious. He not only was happy, he had happiness enough and to spare to lend poor King Saul. That is true still. Don't dream that goodness makes people gloomy. It is sin that makes people commit suicide. Goodness means happiness. It means everything. The best people are the funniest.

I am sure many of you have read Lewis Carroll's books for children, full of exquisite fun. He died not long ago, loved by thousands of children.

What kind of a man was he? He was one of the most religious men in Oxford, and out of his religion came his fun, his love, and all that makes for happiness. Boys and girls, do not make the mistake of thinking that obedience to God will make life less bright for you.

IV

And then, in the last place, to crown all this, David, the best in character himself, was the most helpful for other people. The country in which David lived needed help at that moment; and what it needed was not brute strength; what it needed was character. Character was the thing that could help the people most—and because David was the best in character, he was the one who could help other people most.

Well, that is still true. The world wants clever boys. The world wants geniuses. The world wants clever girls. But let me tell you one thing. It wants something more, by far, than cleverness; it wants downright goodness, honesty, cheerfulness, good temper, patience, pluck. These are the things that make goodness, which the world wants more than anything else; and if you are going to be helpful people, you will not be helpful by your cleverness, nor by your scholarship, as much as by your downright, genuine goodness.

Boys and girls, pray this prayer, then, for yourselves. Pray it not in the words I am going to give

you, but any words you like. Amongst the things you ask God for to-night or to-morrow morning, ask Him just this—O God, make me good, make me really good; make me very good, for Christ's sake. Amen.

XLII

NUTTING

“I went down into the garden of nuts.”—SONG OF SONGS vi. 11.

DID you ever go nutting? If you did, I am sure you enjoyed it, for I know of few things so pleasant as to go down into the garden of nuts to see the green plants of the valley. A little while ago I found myself in a lovely Welsh valley. The sun looked down from a clear sky, but the day was not too hot, for the sea was close by, and a cool salt breeze blew in from the water and went with a rush over hill and dale.

I saw no vines nor pomegranates, but green plants grew in plenty, and on the hillside stood hazel bushes by the score, covered with more nuts than you could count in ten years, I should think.

So along with the other children—for at the sight of the nuts I threw off more than a score of years—I went nutting that afternoon. I thought of you, the boys and the girls to whom I preach. I should have liked you to be there; I am sure you would have enjoyed yourselves. Then, as that could not possibly be, I thought perhaps I could gather some-

thing besides nuts, a thought or two that might be useful to you all.

I

The first thought that came to me was this: What a simple thing, after all, happiness is.

A fine day, a little valley, a cool breeze, a score or so of hazel bushes growing wild, health and cheerful company—these, together, make about as much happiness as can be put into a day. Oh yes, happiness is a simple, easy thing. Pleasures—especially some pleasures—are very dear. They cost money and health, and even life; but the dearest, the most expensive pleasures are the poorest. True pleasure is cheap. Real happiness is a very simple thing. Most of us can have a great deal of it. Learn, then, to make much of simple pleasures. Remember that happiness depends far more on your temper than on your possessions—on what you are rather than on what you have.

II

I could not help noticing that afternoon how one thing led to another. If I found a single good cluster of nuts on a bush, by the time I had gathered that, I had spied another and another again. Not once did I come on a bush with only one cluster.

Well, now, it is just so in life. Things grow in clusters. One good thing leads to another. Read one good, wise book, and you are almost certain to be drawn on to read other good books. Make friends with one good, truthful, honest lad, and you

will be almost sure to fall in with others of the same sort, and by and by you will find that you cannot make a friend of anyone who is not of that kind.

Practise any one good habit, and you will find all sorts of good habits growing upon you. For good things grow in clusters.

And so do bad things. You hear it said sometimes of a boy or a man, "He has only one fault." Now that is not true. No one has only one fault. Bad things go together. One fault or one sin draws on another. If a boy is a liar, you may be sure that he is cowardly and selfish and mean, and most likely he is dishonest. Take warning, then, when you see one bad thing there are others in hiding. Don't excuse yourself for any fault. Away with it before it has gathered other bad habits around it. "Be not deceived ; evil company doth corrupt good manners."

III

I noticed, also, that there were two kinds of bushes. Some threw out long branches, others had been cut down and pruned, and it was on these the nuts grew thickest. The great, tall, weedy suckers had no fruit whatever on them. Now, if these bushes could feel and think, what would they have said when the woodman came along with his hook and cut down their tall branches? I think they would have cried out, "Oh ! this is very cruel. Why does the pitiless man cut us down in this way?" But he was *not* cruel, for if a bush is to bear fruit it must be checked and pruned.

Do not you sometimes say to yourself, "Why all these rules and lessons? Why must I obey, obey, obey? Why can't I be left alone to do as I like?" Well, I will tell you: it is because you are loved. Where there is no love there is no law, no rule, no care. No one ever troubles about the weed, and so it never gets to be anything better than a weed. Flowers are cared for, thinned off and pruned, and so become sweet and beautiful. Well, you are the flowers of our homes—God's little flowers—therefore, keep the rules, learn the lessons, be obedient, like Jesus was, that your lives, like His, may bear much fruit.

IV

Once that afternoon I had a most strange fancy. I thought that a little bush, from whose branches I was taking a great many nuts, spoke to me. I thought it asked me a question, "Do *you* bear much fruit?" Of course it was only my fancy—and yet, did not Jesus say that He was the True Vine, and that we were branches in Him? Did He not also say that He wanted us to bear much fruit? Did not St. Paul, too, explain what Jesus meant by fruit?—"Love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, truthfulness, gentleness, self-control." Well, now, do we bear a great deal of this fruit? A hazel bush covered with yellow nuts, an apple tree laden with apples, a plum tree with its branches bending under the weight of ripe plums—what lovely sights these are! Yes, but lovelier

far is a boy or girl whose life has much love, much joy, peace, patience, and gentleness in it.

You are God's garden. When God comes down to His garden, does He find much fruit on you? Think of it, little ones, think of it.

XLIII

SAFE IN GOD'S GREAT CARE

“But the very hairs of your head are all numbered.”—MATTHEW x. 30.

DO you remember the strange story that is told in the First Book of Samuel about a young prince—Jonathan, the son of King Saul and the friend of David? Saul had said that if anyone ate any food until he had conquered his enemies he should die. Jonathan did not hear what his father said, and being very hungry, he ate some honey which he found in a wood. When King Saul knew of it he said, “Thou shalt surely die, Jonathan.” But the people closed round the young prince, and said, “Shall Jonathan die? God forbid, there shall not one hair of his head fall to the ground. So the people rescued Jonathan, that he died not.” Well, now, it was fine to be loved like that, was it not? To be young and brave and popular, to be cared for by lots of people, must have made Jonathan feel very happy, very safe, and also very determined not to do anything bad or mean so long as he lived. But then we are not princes, you will say; we don’t

have the chance to do fine things and make people care for us.

No, that is true; and yet you too are cared for with a great care. Do you remember that a few months ago what is called a census was taken in this country? All the men, women, and children that live in this land were numbered on a certain night. Their names were all taken down—their ages and what they did for a living, if they were grown up, were all put down carefully in a book. Everyone was counted. No one, however great, was counted as more than one. No one, however small, was reckoned as less than one. The king only counts as one. The beggar counts the same. The little baby in his cradle, the old man dying, each is put down as one in the Nation's Book of Life. To harm any one of these would be a crime against the whole country. To kill anyone would be murder.

So that we are all of us cared for with a great care. We are as safe as the law of the land can make us, for we are all numbered in the Nation's Book of Life. Although we are not, as you say, princes, and have never done anything great, yet the people of England close round us as the people of Israel closed round Jonathan, to keep us safe from harm; and we ought to love our country, to thank God for it, and pray Him always to keep it great, and make it still better and better.

II

But we are cared for with a greater care than that of our country. When Jesus told His friends

that the very hairs of their head were all numbered, He meant that they were all safe in God's care. God, who cares even for the little sparrows, and knows when one of them falls to the ground and dies, cares much more for us. We are His children. He is our Father. He knows and notices everything about us. And if we are only good, obedient, wise children, although men may hate us, and we may have to do difficult and dangerous things, yet, as Jesus says in another place (Luke xxi. 18), "There shall not a hair of our head perish." We, and everything that belongs to us, are safe—safe in God's great care. We have only to love Him, trust Him, do as He bids us, and we are safe everywhere and for ever.

Since I have been staying by the seaside this year, I have made friends with several little people. One of them, a little fellow of about two years and a half old, has a wonderful memory. He recites all sorts of nursery rhymes in a very solemn tone of voice, which makes it the more amusing. But the other day he recited the 23rd Psalm. "The Lord is my Seppard, I sall not want," he began, and on he went till, when he came to the fourth verse, "Yea, though I walk thloo the wally of the sadow of death, I will fear no evil," I did not know whether to smile or cry. The thought of that bright, clever little dot, impatient to get away and play on the sands, walking through the "wally of the sadow," as he called it, touched me very much. And now this very morning I hear that another little playmate of just that age *has* passed through

the valley of the shadow. Ah yes! little children as well as grown people have to walk that dark way, but they are safe—the little ones, living and dying, are quite safe in God's great care. The very hairs of their head are numbered.

III

"Fear not ye, therefore," is what Jesus says. Be not afraid, because you are safe in God's care. Don't be afraid to do whatever is right. Don't be cowards in goodness. Be brave for God, and God will look after you. That is one lesson. The people said of Prince Jonathan, "He hath wrought with God this day." He was saved from death because he had been so brave. Well, let us be brave with God. Don't be afraid or ashamed of doing what is right. Nothing shall harm you if ye be followers of that which is good. Some may mock you, and hate you for telling the truth, for refusing to join them in wicked ways, but God will honour you, love you, take care of you. And if God praises us it does not matter who mocks; if He loves us and cares for us, it matters little who hates us. The very hairs of your head are all numbered. Fear ye not, therefore.

IV

There is one other lesson which we should not forget. We should all of us be *very happy* in God's love. St. Paul, in the great storm you read of in

Acts xxvii., when he noticed how sad and anxious the others were, so sad that they scarcely tasted any food, begged them to eat and be cheerful, for, he said, "There shall not a hair fall from the head of any of you." Then were they all of good cheer. The storm still raged, the ship still rocked, but they were very happy in God's care.

Well, ought not we to be happy? Children, do you know that it is a great sin to be miserable and discontented? To mope and grumble and to be always wishing for things? It is our duty to be happy and bright and cheerful, since God loves us so much.

Are you poor, are you weak and ill, deformed or lame? Well, that is hard to bear. Still, don't break your heart over it, don't let it conquer you. God knows, God notices, God cares, God loves. It will all come right, gloriously right. Carry your cross as Jesus carried His cross, bravely and sweetly, knowing right well that every hair of your head is numbered. You are safe in God's great care.

XLIV

A LESSON IN PRAYER

“I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.”—
EPHESIANS iii. 14.

THIS text is a lesson in prayer. “I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.”

I

First of all, whenever Paul prayed he thought of the greatness of God. That was why he knelt. He knelt to show his reverence. He knelt because he felt that while he was so very small, God was so very high, and great, and pure, and holy. He knelt because he felt that while God was so pure, without any fault in Him, without any sin, light without darkness at all, he himself was a very sinful, a very weak, and a very imperfect man; and so when he prayed, the feeling of God's greatness came over him, and he bowed his knees in prayer.

Well, now, little children, when you pray you ought to think not only of what you want; you ought to think not only of yourselves; you ought to think also of who you are praying to. You ought

to think of how great God is. If you do not think of God's greatness, you will just rattle off your prayers, and your prayers will become less and less good, of less and less value to you, till at last they will be of no value at all. For a mere prayer rattled off by rote does you no good, does no one else any good. There must be a right temper of mind before you can pray, and the temper of mind is that of reverence, that of respect. Not that you should be afraid of God. He will do you no harm. Do not be afraid of Him, but have the feeling within you when you pray that you are very small, He is very great; you are very weak and sinful, He is high and pure and holy.

Did you ever hear of the prayer of the Breton fisherman, tossed in his boat by the great angry waves? He was heard crying out, "O God, save me; Thy ocean is so great, and my boat is so small." That is it, that is the temper of prayer—a man feeling the greatness of God; a little child feeling how great God is, so that when he prays he prays reverently, and does not merely rattle off his words.

That is the first thing in this lesson of prayer.

II

But there is a second thing. Paul did not think only of God's greatness; nor, indeed, did he think chiefly of God's greatness. He thought a great deal more when he prayed of God's goodness, of God's love, of His kindness, of how loving and

tender and dear God was. "I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ." Jesus Christ was the very image, the very living picture of God; and so when Paul prayed he did not think of God so much as the Maker of heaven and earth, but as the Father of Jesus Christ, the God of whom Jesus Christ was the picture. You know a man may be very, very great; he may be a great poet, or a great painter, or a great politician, or a great soldier, or a great king, may have wonderful powers, and yet his little child does not think of him chiefly as being great. He thinks of him chiefly as being kind; he thinks of him as the one that loves him most of all; and that is just what Paul thought of when he prayed. He thought a great deal about the greatness of God, but he thought a great deal more about the love and the goodness of God.

Now, if you are ever to learn to pray aright, you must think too of the goodness of God. You must remember when you pray that you are praying to a great love, a holy love, a great tender love. Do not think when you pray that you are a little beggar coming to beg things from God. Prayer is not begging at all. God is not one that gives to beggars; God is the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. He is the one that is far more willing to give than ever you or I are to ask of Him; and when you pray, think of Jesus Christ, how kind He was, how willing He was to do good, how people would not let Him do all the good He wanted to do them. He was like the sun on some of our London days. The sun is up there in heaven, and we go walking about

the streets under a grey, damp blanket of mist, and we say, "Oh, where is the sunshine? Where is the sun gone to?" And there is the sun up in heaven, trying all he can to come into London; but we have sent up the fog, and we will not let him come. The sun is up there: he wants to shine upon us every day—that is what he is there for—and fill every house and every street with joy; but our London fog will not let him.

Now, was not Jesus Christ just so? He wanted to fill men's lives and hearts with kindness, and He did a great deal, but He was not able to do half or a quarter of what He wanted to do. Men would not let Him.

Now, that is just what God is. God is like Jesus Christ, only greater. He is Infinite, He is measureless. What Jesus Christ was as a Man here on earth, the One you are praying to is as God for ever—the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

I gave you that hymn to sing just now; perhaps you think it is rather early in the year to sing it—

"God, who hath made the daisies."

Well, the daisies have come already. There are flowers out already in country places. He is still the same this year; He who hath made beautiful things last year is busy making beautiful things to please you this year. But though it is nice to think of God who makes the daisies, it is nicer to think of Him as the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. There is more pity and love in Jesus than God can put in a flower.

Little children, think of God as great. Be very reverent. Do not rattle off your prayers, but think of Him as the Father of Jesus Christ, as the great, holy, tender love. He wants to do you good. He will never get tired of hearing you. He will always be far readier to listen as you ask.

III

Then the third thing is this: "I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ." That means, he prayed, he asked for something.

Now, what did Paul ask for? If you will read the verses over after you go home, or if you remember them as I read them to you just now, you will see what Paul prayed for was that God would help him and the friends he loved to be good men and women; and that is what you ought to pray for. Do not think that God will give you everything you ask for. He won't; that would not be kind. A little girl may want a new doll; well, God will not give her the new doll, nor the new frock, nor the new hat, nor the new book. Those are not things to ask for. You would like to have a lot of things, and God will not give them to you. It would not be kind if He did. You who are growing up know that. You have sometimes had charge of your little brother or sister; you were at first great friends, but by and by he wanted more and more things; he wanted ever so many things, and of course if you gave him all he wanted you would still be first favourite. But you would not;

you refused. Why? Because you did not love him, did not love your little brother? No, but because you did; you saw he wanted things that would do him harm, perhaps kill him. It was because you were kind you did not give them. But if you did not care for him you would give him everything; but love refuses, and for the moment baby hates you; he tries to hit and scratch you. But still, because you love him, you would rather he thought you did not love him than give him what would do him harm.

Well, people ask God for a lot of things which God will not give them; not because He is not a kind God, but because He is. But what should you ask God for? When you pray you should ask God to make you strong in all that is good; you should ask God to make you willing and ready to obey; to give you a temper that becomes sweeter and sweeter day by day; to make you brave in spirit; to make you truthful; to make you holy children; to keep you pure; to make you noble boys and girls; and to help you to grow up to be good men and good women.

Those are the things to ask God for; things to make us like Himself. And nobody ever asks for these things but God gives them, gives them willingly, gives them gladly. That is just what He is there for. Just as the sun is in the sky to shine upon the gardens, so God is in heaven to answer these prayers of ours. You can have no better thought in your minds than this that Paul had of God—the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the

Everlasting Love, the Everlasting Holiness. Pray to Him, little children; there is nothing so serious as prayer. He is the wisest man that prays most constantly to God.

May God bless you, and keep you, for His name's sake. Amen.

XLV

A STORY OF FOUR

“Then they said one to another, We do not well : this day is a day of good tidings, and we hold our peace : . . . now therefore come, let us go and tell the king’s household.”—2 KINGS vii. 9.

IN a great many children’s homes there is a missionary box, which is brought out when the children remember. A good many of you boys and girls read little missionary papers, and sometimes a missionary book ; perhaps, too, you go to hear a missionary address ; and if the papers, books, and addresses contain good stories—lion stories for choice—then, of course, you enjoy them very much.

But now I want to tell you this : that the aim of the missionary box is not simply the amount of money that you yourselves give or collect now, the aim of the books and papers and the missionary address is not simply that you may pass away a pleasant hour, and be thrilled with interesting stories ; the real aim is that by these little things, done and enjoyed while you are children, you may grow up to feel an interest in the missionary work, loving it, thinking about it, caring for it, and doing everything you can to help it on.

Well, but why should we care about missionaries and their work? Why should we, when we grow up to be men and women, and have money of our own to spend and give, why should we give any of it for missionary purposes, or think at all about the work?

Well, the answer lies in the story that I have just read to you from this chapter. It seems to me that this story is an exact picture of the great missionary work all over the world.

I

In the first place, is not this a story of what God has done in Jesus Christ? You know what the story says: A king had brought a great army and surrounded the city of Samaria, so that nobody could get out of it to fetch food, and nobody could get into it to bring food. There he was, sitting down in front of the walls, just waiting for the people inside to be starved out. There was no barley, there was no wheat. At last the people got so hungry that they were killing one another; and then the prophet of God said, "To-morrow food will be cheap; there will be plenty of food in this city to-morrow." Of course they mocked at him. Then what happened? Well, outside the walls there were four people. They were very sick and bad; they were not allowed to come in at the best of times, and they were starving. They ventured in the twilight, before they could see anything clearly, into the camp of the enemy. There was no one to receive them; there was plenty of everything to be

got; plenty of food, gold and silver, everything to be had for the taking, and they were surprised, as well they might be. What had happened? Well, in some way or other God had frightened the soldiers, and they had run off without striking a blow or drawing one drop of blood. God had removed the great terror that hung round the city. There was nothing to fear any more. There was plenty of food. God had done it in a moment. Of course everybody was glad. It was, as these lepers said, a day of good tidings for all men and women—for the sick people, the little hungry children. The people went round the city of Samaria shaking each other by the hand, saying, "Is not this splendid news? We shall not die after all; there is plenty of food."

Now, is not that a picture of what God has done in Jesus Christ for the whole world? He has done what no one could do for himself. All the fear of punishment, all the fear of death, all that taken away just by one act of God. He has sent His Son, Jesus Christ, into the world to live and die for men, and do for them what they could not do for themselves. The siege has been raised! it is a day of good tidings. The gospel means that—good news. Jesus Christ is good news for every man and woman and every child in the world. That is what God has done.

II

Well, now, then, look in the second place; is not this a picture of what men should do for one

another? When the lepers found that the Syrians had gone, of course they fell-to and had breakfast. And you cannot blame them; they had not had breakfast for many a long day before, at anyrate not a decent breakfast, and you cannot blame them, they were so very hungry. The first thing the poor things did was to fall-to and have something to eat themselves, and then, after they had had quite enough to eat, they saw the gold, and they began to pocket some of that, and, as they were afraid it would not be safe in their pockets, they went away and buried it. Well, I don't blame them much for that. That was not very wrong, for it belonged to them as much as to anyone else. Ah! *but it was wrong*, because there was a great town close by starving; men and women literally starving for want of food. It was wrong. They themselves felt it to be wrong. They said to one another, "We do not well; we are not acting rightly in this. Let us give up the gold and the clothing, and let us go and tell the people in the town, that they may come out and share in the good things God has provided." So they went.

Now Jesus Christ has made this country of England a pleasant and a safe country for you children to dwell in. He has made it a country of strong laws. It is Jesus Christ who has made your happy home, everything pleasant, good, and happy in life. And every hope you have in life, and in the life to come, is just what Jesus Christ has made for you and given you. It is right that

you should enjoy these things, and be thankful to Him for them. But will it be right, do you think, if you do nothing else, if you simply keep all the good things to yourselves, and do not remember the many countries and towns with children like yourselves, unhappy and dismal and miserable all their days, because they have never heard of Jesus Christ? Should we not all say to one another, as these lepers said, "We do not well; this is a day of good tidings, and we hold our peace. Come, let us tell the king's household."

That is the meaning of the mission work. The missionaries are people who go for us to tell the king's household, to tell all the poor people, and the rich people, and the ignorant people of the world, all the great good news that has come from heaven to this earth.

III

And then, in the last place, this is a story of a great work that was done by very, very humble means.

It was very odd that God should let this thing be found out by four lepers. It was a very curious thing that as soon as He made the Syrians hear the noise of chariots, that He did not make the people in the city hear the noise of the army running away. It was very curious; but God does curious things. He does things in the oddest way. He just drove the Syrians off, and let the lepers find it out. They were the first, and on them fell the duty of

telling others. But although there were only four lepers, there was enough of them, and they had enough power to tell the story, and they told it and saved the great city.

Well, you may say, if God wants everybody in the world to hear of Jesus Christ, why doesn't He Himself tell the whole world? Why does He not thunder it out? Why does He not flash it in lightning? I don't know. It is never His way. I tell you He does things in the oddest way.

He sent Jesus Christ into this world to save the world, and He has left it to men to tell one another. It is a very curious thing that we in this little tiny island should ever have heard of it, and that the chief duty of telling the world should now belong to England. But that is God's way. He calls on you English children, as well as English men and women, to do for the world what the lepers did for the city—to tell the king's household that there is plenty of the Bread of Life for them. These lepers were very few, and remember this, the people who try to do any good in the world are still very few. There are very few people in the world that do any good. It is only a few people give to anything. Most people do not give to any good cause. Which will you be? Will you be among the many that do not try to do any good? Or will you, when you grow up, be among the few, the noble few, the generous few, the Christian few, the few that follow Jesus Christ?

Dear children, make your choice. Do not follow the great heedless, thoughtless, selfish crowd. Follow

the few that follow Christ, and Christ will reward you—reward you so greatly and wonderfully for everything that you do for His sake.

May God bless you and keep you, for Christ's sake. Amen.

XLVI

JESUS CALLED A LITTLE CHILD

“Jesus called a little child unto Him, and set him in the midst of them.”—MATTHEW xviii. 2.

WHETHER it was a boy or a girl He called we are not told ; only that it was a “little child”—one too young and weak to be of much use as yet, one would think. But goodness, in child or grown-up man, is not a little thing. Wherever there is goodness there is value and power. Every bit of goodness is, in the sight of God, of great price. Just as a small diamond is of more worth than many pennies, so a little goodness is better than much strength or great wealth. So Jesus called this child because He saw goodness, gentleness, kindness shining in its little life.

How did He know? Well, perhaps He knew the little one, or perhaps He had watched the child at play. We know Jesus did watch children playing. He tells us of a game He had seen in the market-places. He had seen children playing at weddings and funerals, and He had heard part at least of the little quarrel that followed the game.

So he watched this little one—had seen its pretty,

gentle ways, and heard its soft, kind voice, and now that He wanted to teach His disciples a lesson in real goodness He called this little one from its play to come and stand by Him, and be His little living text for Him to preach from.

Now was it not a fine thing that just at the moment when Jesus wanted a good little child there was close at hand the very child He wanted? Of course the child did not know he or she would be called that day. Something might have happened to put it in a bad temper. It might have been quarrelling, shouting, screaming, stamping its feet in anger, or even fighting, so that when Jesus looked round for a nice, quiet, gentle child, He would not have seen one anywhere. Would not that have been a great pity! But, as it was, Jesus was not disappointed. This little one was ready for Him. When Jesus wanted a gentle, loving child the child was there.

Well, Jesus wants such children still. He wants them as examples and helps to others. In every class in the Sunday or week-day school, in the playground, and at home, when quarrels begin and angry words fly about like sparks, Jesus wants a gentle, patient little child, in order to make the others ashamed. And would it not be a pity if, when Jesus called for such a little child, He should not be able to find one in your class, your playground, your home?

But how shall we know when Jesus wants us? Ah! you cannot know that. It is impossible to tell when He may call. The only thing for you to do

is to be always ready—to feel that you belong to Him at all times—to remember that He sees you as He saw the children in the market-place, and then, whenever He calls for a good, loving, gentle child to help Him in His work, He is sure to find one ready to His hand in your class or your home.

“Jesus called a little child unto Him.” I saw that text once above a child’s grave. It was a very tiny grave, it looked like a little green cradle, and it was so pleasant to think that the little child itself had gone back to Jesus. Do you know that one-third of all the children born into this world die while they are babies? “That is sad,” do you say? Oh no, I think not. Don’t you remember some very wet, cold day in winter, when you had got ready for school? You had your thickest boots and heaviest wraps. The baby had got hold of the biggest umbrella in the house, and was very proud to stagger along to school under the weight and glory of it. Mother opened the door for you all to go, but at the moment a great gust of wind and swirl of rain beat in your faces, and, before you had got to the gate, mother called out, “Little ones, come back; it is too cold and wet to go any farther.” So you turned back before you had gone ten yards from the house.

Well, what is the meaning of all these children’s deaths? I think it means that Jesus looks out from heaven, and seeing how cold and wet, how rough and painful life is for many children, calls them back at once. He says, “Little ones, it is *too* cold.

Come back again." And at His gentle call the little ones go quickly and gladly home to God.

Dear children! the call of Jesus, whether in life or death, is the call of Love. He is the children's Friend. Let every child be a friend of Jesus.

XLVII

PRAISING GOD

"Joshua said unto Achan, My son, give, I pray thee, glory to the Lord God of Israel."—JOSHUA vii. 19.

"GIVE glory to God." Whatever did Joshua mean? Did he mean singing or praying? No, he did not mean that just then. Achan, perhaps you remember, had done wrong, but would not own it, and what Joshua meant was simply this—tell the truth—own your sin—praise God by telling the truth, whatever it cost you.

Now, is that not a fine way of putting it? To tell the truth is to show reverence for God. To say what is not true is to insult God. Every boy or girl who is careful of the truth gives God glory, but everyone who is careless of it is guilty of a great, great sin, for he acts as if there were no God, or as if he did not think God were worth caring about. Could there be a greater sin than that? For instance:

I

Some children are easily tempted to exaggerate. I know that is a big word. Still, you know what it

means, don't you? When you tell a story about something you saw, or heard, or did on your holidays, and as you go along, in order to make it seem *very* wonderful and make your companions envy or admire you, you add little bits here and there—that's exaggeration.

Others, again, pitch their speech much too high. They say "Awfully sorry," when anyone can see they are not sorry at all; or, "Thank you so much," for some trifling favour. Well, these don't seem great falsehoods, do they? No, but we have no tape to measure sins. A seed seems a little thing—yet how soon a little weed runs over a garden! A spark is a little thing—but it may burn half a street. A little leak may sink a very big ship. So the habit of telling little falsehoods may easily ruin a man's life. Learn to be true, then, in all things. Lie not at all. Remember God knows all and hears all. Never dishonour Him by the smallest lie. Give glory to God by *always* speaking the truth.

II

Again, children sometimes say what is not true because they are afraid. They have done wrong and are afraid of a scolding, an imposition, or a caning. They shield themselves behind a lie. Well, that means that they think more of a little trouble or a little pain than they do of God. I read the other day of a little boy who was playing in the garden among the flowers. Suddenly a nice flower-pot fell over with a great crash. The father,

who was reading under a tree, rose with a start; the mother ran out in fear lest someone was hurt. When she saw her favourite flower crushed, and the pretty vase she had been given as a present broken to pieces, she asked sternly, "Who did this?" The nurse, fearing lest the little boy should be beaten, said, "I did it." But the child said, "No, mamma, it was I." "He couldn't help it," said the nurse. "Yes, I could; I did it on purpose," was the boy's strange reply. "But why?" asked the mother. "To make a big noise, and see dada jump up," was the answer. The father, who had listened in wonder, took the little fellow in his arms, and kissed him, saying, "I am glad that my boy is more afraid of a lie than a caning." Of course it was very naughty to push the vase over, but it was brave of him to stand up, and refuse to shelter himself behind a lie. He was a brave boy, and he gave God glory.

So you will find that very often the simple truth will save you from what you fear; but even if it should not, if you have to suffer, still don't play the coward and the sneak. Tell the truth, and give God glory.

III

Or again, one boy hates another. He is afraid to show his dislike openly, so he hits him with a lie. Perhaps a letter is written full of unkind and untrue things. Pains are taken to disguise the writing. Somebody else's name is put to it, or no name at all. Well, now, that is very mean and cruel, is it not? And how it dishonours God! For the boy or girl

who writes such a letter takes pains that no one should know who is the writer, but does not mind that God knows. As if there were no God, or as if He were not worth considering.

Is not that a frightful sin? Then, dear children, keep to the truth always in all things, at all costs. Truth is the foundation of goodness. A boy without love for truth is like a house without a foundation. It may fall any moment. Get into the habit of thinking about God. Begin each day by reminding yourselves that God is, and what God is. Jesus Christ, who is our example, always thought of what God would like Him to do, and so He—though tempted every day like as we are—never sinned. Do you also remember your Creator in the days of your youth, and the thought of God ever with you will help you to live true, noble, holy lives.

Now do not forget: every falsehood, spoken or looked, nodded or written, dishonours God. Every time you tell the truth, and all the while you are careful about truth, you praise and glorify God, your Father.

XLVIII

OUR SHEPHERD

“The Lord is my Shepherd ; I shall not want.”—PSALM xxiii. 1.

I WONDER when David wrote that. Was it, do you think, when as a boy he was himself a shepherd of sheep? If so, was it not a fine thought to come gliding into a young boy's mind? Much of his time he would be alone. All his time he would be looked down upon by his elder brothers—because it was only the younger brothers that were sent to look after sheep—and so he would feel sometimes very lonely, and feel sometimes perhaps a little bit sad to think that he was being looked down upon. But if, when he was kind and gentle to the sheep, and patient with the little frisky lambs, this thought came into his mind that he too had One that looked after him; One that would love him, care for him, be patient with him; that he had a Shepherd, had the greatest Being in all the world to look after him and love him, “The Lord is my Shepherd,”—if he did think of that as a boy, I feel sure that it would make him gentler still, very brave, and very happy as a shepherd.

Or do you think it was when, as a young man, the people came to him to make him king, and asked him to lead them, and care for them, leaving the sheep to others, and come and be the shepherd of grown-up men and women?

Well, that was a great thing for a young man to do. It was a very troublesome time. It required a great deal of patience and strength in a man to be a king—that is, the shepherd of grown people. At that moment do you think that David thought, “Well, yes, I will come; I will venture it. I will venture it because I have a King. I myself have a Shepherd. The Lord is my Shepherd, and I shall be able to lead you because He will lead me”?

Or do you think it was in after years, when, as an old man he had had a great deal of sorrow and when trouble and sickness came on him, and he felt, perhaps for the first time, that he had not very long to live, and he thought of all the wrong things he had done (for he had done a great many of them); but when he thought of the end, thought of death with all its gloom, did he say to himself, “Well, I will not give up, I will not let my heart break; I will not be afraid, for the Lord is my Shepherd. He will look after me, as I when a boy used to look after the straggling sheep of my flock. I will fear no evil, because He will look after me”?

I do not know when the thought came to him; but it was a fine thought, whatever time it came into a man's heart, that he had One to look

after him and love him as he had looked after and loved the lambs of his flock.

But now you will ask, perhaps—I do not know, but perhaps you will—Had David a right to say this about God? Of course a man looks after sheep, of course a king looks after his people, of course a father looks after his children. Still more, of course, a mother looks after her children. But have we a right to think of God as taking an interest in, let us say, a little shepherd lad, or in a grown man, or in an old man near death? Had David a right to say this of God?

Now, boys and girls, that is the very best of it all. He really had a right to say it, because, whatever goodness there is in the world, wherever you find a bit of carefulness, a bit of tenderness, any little bit of gentleness anywhere, it is simply a shadow thrown on the earth by the immense carefulness, tenderness, and gentleness that is in God.

The books tell you that in order to find the beginning of anything in the world, be it a flower in summer or a snow crystal in winter, you have got to go back and back, and then you have got to go up and up, and you will find the beginning of every beautiful thing in the world in the sun. Well, look here, if you want to find the beginning of every tenderness, every bit of fatherhood and motherhood and brotherhood, and every bit of love and care and kindness among men, among children, from men and children to animals, and from animals back to them (for there is a great deal of love in these wonderful creatures), I say, if you want to

find where it all comes from, you will have to go back and have to go up. You will find the beginning of it in God; it all flows down from Him. It is He who makes your dog love you; it is He who makes the cat purr so gently when she sees you; it is He who makes the baby smile, makes the mother kiss it; it is He who makes the father and the shepherd kind; and when David said this text, he said a thing which is quite true. He had a perfect right to say it.

Well, now, this is a very great thing, boys and girls, because it meant this: David was choosing a Leader for life. The things you do for life are very serious. You may do a thing that will last a day or two, and does not matter very much whether it turns out well or ill, but when you come to choose your trade, or profession, or calling, you must be very serious about that, because it is a thing for life. And so with regard to a leader. When David said, "The Lord is my Shepherd," he did not mean for to-day; he meant for life. And this is the question I should like to ask you, children, who are growing up now: Have you made up your mind who is to be your leader for life? And I will tell you this—whoever you choose to lead you, there is only One that has the right to lead you; there is only One that can lead you. Your Shepherd is God: He alone has the right, and He will lead you aright, and if you would but follow Him life would become quite simple to you.

Do you know the people who get flurried and

bothered and excited and worried in life? The people that have not got a leader. They look, and they see some people going this way and they see other people going that way, and they do not know what to do at all. But if a man has a leader, if a man has taken Jesus Christ for his Leader, everything is perfectly simple, there is no trouble at all. They say, "Oh, so and so does so and so; let him do it. So and so says so and so; let him say it. I follow my Leader."

It is beautiful to see a lot of men under the command of a leader. Just a glance of his eye, just the shake of a flag, just a nod of his head or a strum of music, and how they move and sway and turn and wheel. But the crowd looking on? What do they care about the crowd? The thing is quite simple; they have got their leader. So would life become simple for you, and safe for you if you would but choose this Leader that David chose to be your Leader for life.

May God give you wisdom and grace to do it, for His name's sake. Amen.

XLIX

THE EVERY-DAY CHRIST

"Then shall the righteous answer Him, saying, Lord, when saw we Thee an hungered, and fed Thee? or thirsty, and gave Thee drink?"—MATTHEW xxv. 37.

I

WHEN you think of Jesus Christ, what have you in your mind? Do you think of Him as one who lived long, long ago in a country far away? Do you picture Him to yourself in flowing Jewish robes, speaking to great crowds of people, long since dead, in a language you would not understand?

Well, Jesus did live in that far-off country. He did dress and speak just so. But you did not see Him then, and except in imagination you never can see that Christ. But perhaps when you think of Jesus you think of some beautiful picture you have seen. You have seen pictures of Him as the Good Shepherd leading a little flock, or as the Light of the World carrying a bright lamp in His hand. Or you have seen Him pictured with a glory round His head, or crowned with thorns dying on the cross.

And when you think of these pictures you have a kind of Sunday feeling, have you not? For they are all of them so different from anything one sees on week-days. One never sees anything at all like these pictures in school, on the street, at work or play.

II

But when the people in this text asked Jesus, "Lord, when saw we Thee?" His answer is, "You saw Me every day. Whenever you fed a hungry man, visited a sick one, or was kind to a stranger, you did it all to Me. I was there every day."

Oh yes! We too may meet Christ every day. Indeed we do meet Him every day. Every day we may do Him service, and many is the day when He comes to us and we take no notice whatever. For listen, children, Jesus Christ is in every duty that knocks at our door. In every bit of right that asks us to do it, in every word of truth that asks us to speak it, in every bit of kindness that asks for the loan of our hands, Jesus Christ Himself comes to us.

To see Jesus Christ you need not think of the Holy Land, nor of pictures, or churches, or the Bible even. You may see Him in your own house. He comes to your class in school. He may be met on the playground. He walks our London streets. For wherever you go you find duty waiting for you. You see right things, true things, kind things, waiting for somebody to come and do them. And wherever these are He Himself is.

III

Some of your own hymns teach this very plainly and beautifully—

“Day by day we magnify Thee,
Not in words of praise alone ;
Truthful lips and meek obedience,
Show Thy glory in Thine own.”

Then there is another that says—

“Father, lead me day by day,
Ever in Thine own sweet way ;
Teach me to be pure and true,
Show me what I ought to do.”

You remember, too, that you sing—

“Looking upward every day,
Shining on our faces ;
Pressing onward every day,
Toward the heavenly places.”

Yes, you may see Jesus every day of the week and many times a day.

Now, will you think of this the very next time duty calls you or a chance to do a kindness offers itself. Perhaps you will not feel willing to obey. Perhaps you will feel lazy or ill-humoured, and you will be tempted to put the duty off to some other time. But if then you remember that it is Jesus Christ Himself, the every-day Jesus, that is calling you, in a moment your laziness and ill-humour will vanish, and you will find a new pleasure in obedience. The thought that Christ is there and that you, *you*,

are serving Him, will carry you easily through the day. Bit by bit it will become easier not to do wrong, and right will be your greatest pleasure. Children, be every-day servants of Jesus Christ, and He will save you all your days.

L

"FEED MY LAMBS"

"Jesus saith unto Peter, Feed My lambs."—JOHN xxi. 15.

THIS is a little text for little children. Who do you think Jesus meant when He spoke of His little lambs? He meant you, little boys and girls, who are listening to me this morning. He just meant you. He meant you and all other children that ever would be in the world.

Jesus Christ was fond of little children. He talked about them, He nursed them, He played with them, fondled them, smiled at them, and kissed them. He always seemed very fond of little children. And now, after He had died upon the cross, and had been down in the grave, and had conquered death, and had opened the grave, not only for Himself, but for all of us, who like Him shall have to die, He came back for just a little time, and talked to His disciples, and gave them the last orders before He went away again to heaven, and among other things He tells Peter to be careful of the little ones. I am afraid Peter was not always careful of the little ones. And I am afraid John was not either. They were very good men, but a

bit rough, a bit hot-tempered, and a little bit impatient.

You remember when the mothers were bringing little children to Jesus Christ, these disciples ran up to them. "Hush!" they said. "Go back, go back. Do not bring those little children here. We do not want little children here." But Jesus Christ rebuked them, and said, "Suffer the little children, the little ones, to come to Me." He was afraid that Peter and John, and other big men like them, would not be very careful of little children; and so before going away He puts Peter through a kind of little catechism. He says, "Simon, son of Jona, lovest thou Me more than anything else in the world?" And Peter said he did. "Very well," said Jesus Christ, "if you love Me as much as that, listen to Me, to what I am going to tell. By the love you bear Me, feed My little ones; be very tender to the little children—'feed My lambs.'"

You know that is a pet name for children. It is a playful name. The word Jesus Christ used should be translated lambkins—little lambs. It is a playful name, a pet name. I should not like to live in any house where there were no pet names and no nonsense language ever talked. Jesus Christ, before He went away, had all His playfulness with Him, and said to Peter, with a smile, "Look after the little lambkins."

Yes, Jesus Christ is willing for you children to be children; He is willing for you to love play, frolic, and fun. He knows you are children. He wants you to be children. He has been a child Himself, and played and laughed and enjoyed the fun of

boyhood. But He wants you to remember this, that in the midst of all your play and fun you are His—He gave you His own name.

Once, you know, John the Baptist, a very great man, not a very gentle man, not a very tender man—a very strong, rugged man—when he saw Jesus Christ, felt that the difference between himself and Jesus was so great that John said to those who were listening, “Behold the Lamb of God!”—the Gentle One of God. John was more like a lion, but he said of Jesus, “Behold the Lamb of God!”

Well, now, that is the name Jesus gives to little children—My lambs, lambs of God—just as He was a Lamb of God.

Then again, you notice that He calls the children *His* children. That means ownership. You know that what you own you value; you feel an interest in a thing because it is yours. And so Jesus feels an interest in you children because you are His. Remember this, then, only Jesus knows your worth. We do not know in the least what we are. That is one reason why we are so careless about ourselves; that is one reason why we give way to sin and allow evil habits to grow upon us. We do not take care enough of our selves, of our souls, because we do not know our value. But Jesus knows our value. He values us so much that, as you have been singing—

“He died to make us good.”

Try to remember that, little children, you are of great value—you belong to Jesus Christ; you are worth a great deal.

And then the other thing is this: "My little lambs." That means that Jesus loves you. There is a great deal of love in the world. You have been greatly loved, every one of you boys and girls. You have love in your homes; but now I want you to start life believing this—that you are not only beloved at home, that you are beloved of Jesus Christ, that you are beloved of God. These commandments of the New Testament, the things He tells you to do, perhaps they fret you sometimes, and you say, "Oh, I wish I was not always being told to be good, and not to do this or do that. It is very hard." But remember all the commandments come from Christ to you because He cares for you. If He did not care for you He would let you alone.

The stranger, when he passes by in the street, and sees a boy doing a wicked thing, does not stop as a rule to interfere. Why? Because he loves him? No, because he does not care a bit for him. If he cared, he would interfere. Teachers, and fathers and mothers, they interfere with you, not because they do not love, but because they do, and so Jesus Christ loves you. Remember that. And everything He bids you do, and everything He bids you not do, He does it because He loves you.

Well, now, there is one question with which I want to end this sermon for little children. You are quite ready to say, "Yes, we belong to Jesus Christ. We are lambs in the fold of Jesus Christ. We are lambs of Jesus Christ." Now you will grow up, and this word will no longer fit you. You will

not be *little* children. You will not be the lambs of Christ. When you grow up, boys and girls, what do you mean to be? When you grow up will you still say, “‘The Lord is my Shepherd.’ As a man I belong to the same Christ as when a little boy. As a woman I belong to the same Shepherd that I belonged to when I was a little girl”? Be you Christ’s and Christ will be yours, and life will be beautiful, death will be safe, and you shall go and join Him where He is, and be for ever with Him. Amen.

LI

AT TABLE

“Nevertheless He left not Himself without witness, in that He did good, and gave us rain from heaven, and fruitful seasons, filling our hearts with food and gladness.”—ACTS xiv. 17.

SOME of the happiest, and, I fear, some of the unhappiest hours of life are spent at table. An animal, I suppose—a dog, cat, or horse—is happy if only he can have enough to eat and drink. All he wants is food for the body. But we are different. Food is not enough. The soul must feed also, otherwise neither soul nor body is happy. “Better is a dry morsel and quietness therewith, than a house full of feasting with strife.” “Better a dinner of herbs where love is, than a stalled ox” (roast beef) “and hatred therewith.” Meal-time, then, means more than eating and drinking. Food is not enough. We must bring quiet behaviour and hearts filled with love to table. For, as the text says, God wishes to fill our hearts with food and gladness.

Work and play scatter and divide us. One goes one way, another goes another way. Father goes to business, the mother to her house-work, the

children to school, but the table unites us again. We are made one by a common need. And it should be our care to make those gatherings as happy as possible. Grace before meals is a beautiful custom, but we must be on our guard lest it become a custom only. "Don't go through the form of thanking God for what in two minutes you will be saying is not fit to be eaten," said Mrs. Johnson to her husband, the great Doctor. God is not thanked in words; we thank Him when we enjoy His gifts, and help others to enjoy. To be sullen, discontented, selfish at table, is to be ungrateful and wicked, no matter how pretty a Grace we may have said before beginning.

But if we really think of it, and mean it, then the Grace is the best part of the meal, however good it may be, and makes amends for it although it be poor in itself. For what does it mean? It means that we cannot live without God, and that God never forgets to care for us. Many have not enough to eat, but that is because of someone's sin—their own or another's. It is never God's fault. He has sent enough for all. He gives from heaven rains and fruitful seasons enough to fill all hearts with food and gladness. He cares for us all. We do not think of Him all the time; it is not necessary. But when meal-time comes round it should bring the thought of our Father back to all our minds. For without that thought we lose the best thing of all—the taste of love in our food. "Better is a dinner of herbs where love is," says the verse I have quoted already. Yes, but whose love? The love

of those that eat, and the love of those that serve? Yes, and once more, the love of Him that gives us all things. We are beloved of God. Let us be happy in His care. To remember Him at table will not sadden anyone, but fill all hearts with food and gladness.

When Jesus was about to leave the world He gathered His disciples together, and told them what He wished them to do in remembrance of Him. Was it to set up some great monument? No, they were too poor to do that, and if they had not been poor, enemies would have soon pulled it down, or even time itself, after a few hundreds of years, would have destroyed it. Jesus took a little loaf of common bread and divided it among them; He also passed round a cup of wine, and said, "Do this as a memorial of Me." He wished them, whenever they sat at meat together, to think of Him. He set up a simple meal as a memorial of Himself, and it would be a good thing if at table we remembered, not only God's goodness in giving us our daily food, but His love in forgiving us our sins and in preparing for us a home in heaven for ever.

When once a month you see a white cloth laid on this table under the pulpit, and see also the plates with bread and the great silver cups for the wine, you know that it is "Sacrament Sunday," don't you? You know that it is in memory of Jesus Christ. But we may all have this at home. Cups and flagons and wine are not really needed. What is needed is to remember Jesus Christ at meal-time, whatever the food be. In this way every home

would be a church and every meal a sacrament. And how much happier we should be without pride, without discontent, without selfishness!

I said just now, that we want the love of those that serve us. That is true. Servants can make a home very happy, and they can make it very unhappy. We want, then, not only their work, but their love. Children very often do not think of these things. They give a great amount of trouble, and make a lot of work for those who have enough work already. Let us remember that God loves us all, and wishes to fill all our hearts with food and gladness.

In olden times servants sat at table with the rest of the family. They were made to feel that they were part of the family. Perhaps that plan could not be carried out now, but we should all help each other to be happy. We should look on all who live with us as part of the family. We should remember Jesus Christ. He was never proud nor distant. He never gave trouble. In His very first miracle, as you may read for yourselves in the second chapter of St. John's Gospel, Jesus put great honour on servants. They were the only ones He asked to help Him in His first great work. Now, when you are at table, and see the food laid for you, remember that you see the witness of God and the memorial of Jesus Christ. Be glad. God loves you. The food tells you that. Be kind, be gentle, be thoughtful, for that is the will of Christ.

LII

CHRISTMAS STOCKINGS

“And Joseph commanded the steward of his house, saying, Fill the men’s sacks with food, as much as they can carry, and put every man’s money in his sack’s mouth. And put my cup, the silver cup, in the sack’s mouth of the youngest, and his corn money.” — *GENESIS* xliv. 1, 2.

I THINK the story of Joseph is one of the prettiest stories in all the world, and I think that part of it is about as pretty as any. You remember the story of Joseph—how he had been sold to the Ishmaelites, and had been taken down to Egypt, and how there God was with him, and he became a very great man indeed. Then famine came to the land where his brothers were living, and they went down to Egypt to buy corn; and Joseph, their young brother, grown by this time to be a man, disguised himself. They did not know who he was, and all they wanted was to buy corn. He sold them corn, but instead of taking the money, he put the money in the sacks’ mouth, and when they opened the sacks on their way home to feed their cattle, there they found not only the sacks full, but, behold, every man’s money, and when in the sack of Benjamin,

the youngest, there was a beautiful cup as well, you can imagine the surprise that took hold of them when they opened the sacks. They did not know in the world what to make of it. They were greatly afraid.

But now, what did it mean? If you try to look into those sacks, you will see the corn; you will see the money and the silver cup on the top. Do not you see something else there? I can see it. I can see something better than the corn, something much more valuable than the money, and something much more beautiful than the silver cup. What is it? Joseph's love. That is the best thing I find in those sacks, and that is what the brothers found by and by—the forgiving love of their brother. All that corn meant love, that money meant love, and that cup to Benjamin meant a very great love.

Well, you ought to know how to look into things. You ought to learn the secret of opening the gifts that are given you.

I daresay many of you to-morrow night (Christmas Eve) will be following a very pretty old English custom. I do not know how it arose, but it is a very pretty one—the hanging up of the stocking over night. I like to think of it. A number of little people to-morrow night will carefully hang up their stockings at the end of the bed for Father Christmas to come and fill them. Now, what will you do? First of all you say you will keep awake till he comes: you are going to catch him this time; find out where he lives, and whether he really comes down the chimney; so you keep wide awake till at

last you go fast asleep. You will not see him ; you will sleep right on until Christmas morning, and now I can see you rubbing your eyes. You give a good jump out of bed, and grasp the stocking. He has been there, and done his work. Back you go. Now, I want to be with you when you are opening your little bag. First comes out the net. There are chocolates and figs and tangerines and sugar plums. Out with them. Now is there anything else there? "No," you say. Shake it out, then. No, there is not one single thing else there. Count what there was. You go over and check them. Is that all? Yes, all. You silly little children, cannot you see what else was there? Are you as blind as Joseph's brethren? Cannot you see what is better and sweeter than anything else is just the loving thought that went to prepare those things that crowd about you, that wanted to please you, and is only happy this morning in the happiness it gives you? Is not the best thing in your Christmas stocking exactly the thing that was best in Benjamin's sack? Not the corn, not the money, not the cup—but Love. That is the best thing, boys and girls, the love that loves you. It is in everything you get all the year. You ought to remember that. It would make things sweeter for you if you remembered that on every plate that is set before you, and in every cup that you raise to your lips, there is the sweetness of a great love. Whose love is it? Well, it is the love of father and mother to begin with ; but whose love is it? Whose else? My dear boys and girls, in every love there

is the love of God. Your beautiful hymn that you have just been singing about that love is quite true, every word of it. In all love there is the love of God; in all light there is the light of the sun. You say there is no sunlight to-day. What is the gaslight, then? That is sunlight. If there was no sun there would be no gas, no coal, no electricity. It is the sun that gives us all the light; and all the love in the world is just the Christmas love—the love of Jesus Christ. When your father and mother love you, they love you because God is love. God is loving you through them, God is loving you through Jesus Christ.

And how far will this love go? Well, it will go with you all the way. This love of Joseph's went far beyond the mere giving of this present. You remember how he sent for them, and how he made himself known to them, and how he cried over them, and made them great men in his own new country. It was a love that went a long way. And so the love that you find in your Christmas stocking next Tuesday morning, the love of God, will go with you all through life.

Little boys and girls, you may get some things in life that will not be nice. There will be some stockings that, when you open them, will not contain silver cups, money, and corn; you will find trouble, perhaps; but in everything there will be the love of God. Along with everything, whether it is sweet or bitter, the same great love will go with you right on and on. You will grow up to be men and women, and you will leave these little pleasant, childish

excitements behind you, you will look back perhaps to remember the time, and perhaps you will be sorry to think it is gone. But the Christmas love will go with you right on. Try to keep close to the love of God; it will take care of you always.

Did you see or hear the story about the children in South Africa the other day? Three little children were accustomed to going past a certain place to school. One morning they found a soldier stationed as a sentinel there. There was danger in the neighbourhood, and they had put a sentinel on duty there. He had to ask a question before he allowed anyone to pass, and these little children did not know the password. The eldest, a girl, was only six years old. As they came along, they saw the sentinel with his gun. He said, "Give the password," and she could only answer, "I'm a little English girl"; and immediately—perhaps he remembered that he had a little girl far away, in Canada or Australia, England or Ireland, Scotland or Wales—he said, "Pass on, little English girl; all is well." It is quite true. Pass on, little English boys and girls, into the New Century; all is well. God is with you. Christmas means that God loves you this year, and He will love you all the years you live. Pass on, little English boys and girls; all is well. God is with you, and will be to the end.

CATALOGUE OF BOOKS

PUBLISHED BY

JAMES ROBINSON,
BRIDGE STREET,
MANCHESTER.

The Sermon on the Mount

A Practical Exposition of St. Matthew v.—vi. 18.

(Including the Beatitudes),

By Various Authors.

cr 8vo, cloth gilt, 4s. 6d. *net*

CONTENTS.—**Manifesto of the Kingdom** (Matt. v. 2), by W. J. Townsend, D.D.—**Introduction to the Beatitudes** (Matt. v. 2), by E. Griffith-Jones, B.A.—**Poor but Rich** (Matt. v. 3), by E. Griffith-Jones, B.A.—**Sorrowful yet Glad** (Matt. v. 4), by E. Griffith-Jones, B.A.—**Meek but Mighty** (Matt. v. 5), by E. Griffith-Jones, B.A.—**Hungry but Full** (Matt. v. 6), by E. Griffith-Jones, B.A.—**Merciful, therefore Forgiven** (Matt. v. 7), by E. Griffith-Jones, B.A.—**Peacemakers, and Sons of God** (Matt. v. 9), by E. Griffith-Jones, B.A.—**Purity and the Beatific Vision** (Matt. v. 8), by E. Griffith-Jones, B.A.—**Persecuted but Triumphant** (Matt. v. 11), by E. Griffith-Jones, B.A.—**The Man that is to Be** (Matt. v. 48), by E. Griffith-Jones, B.A.—**Power of Christian Lives** (Matt. v. 13-14), by J. G. Greenhough, M.A.—**The Salt of the Earth** (Matt. v. 13) by Alfred Rowland, D.D., LL.D.—**The Pre-eminence of Christian Discipleship** (Matt. v. 14), by Thomas G. Selby—**Showing the Light** (Matt. v. 16), by J. G. Greenhough, M.A.—**The Law's Fulfilment** (Matt. v. 17-20), by W. B. Selbie, M.A.—**Sin and its Judgment** (Matt. v. 21-22), by W. B. Selbie, M.A.—**The Sin of Anger** (Matt. v. 21-22), by Alfred Rowland, D.D., LL.B.—**Sins of Lust** (Matt. v. 27-32), by Alfred Rowland, D.D., LL.B.—**The Sin of Swearing** (Matt. v. 33-37), by Alfred Rowland, D.D., LL.B.—**The Victory of Love over Wrong** (Matt. v. 39-42), by Thomas G. Selby—**Christ's Doctrine of the Extra** (Matt. v. 43-48), by Frank Ballard, M.A., B.Sc.—**The Curse of Ostentation** (Matt. vi. 1-4), by Alfred Rowland, D.D., LL.B.—**The True Nature of Prayer** (Matt. vi. 5-8), by George Milligan, B.D.

The Sermon on the Mount

A Practical Exposition of the Lord's Prayer
(Matthew vi. 9-13).

By Various Authors.

cr 8vo, cloth gilt, 4s. 6d. *net*

CONTENTS.—The Prayer of Faith and the Prayer of Form. By E. GRIFFITH-JONES, B.A.—The Keynote of Prayer. By J. G. GREENHOUGH, M.A.—The Invocation: "Our Father." By E. GRIFFITH-JONES, B.A.—The Ideal Order: "Which art in Heaven." By E. GRIFFITH-JONES, B.A.—The Hallowed Name. By E. GRIFFITH-JONES, B.A.—"Hallowed be Thy Name." By W. B. SELBIE, M.A.—"Thy Kingdom Come." By E. GRIFFITH-JONES, B.A.—The Greatest Petition: "Thy Will be Done." By J. G. GREENHOUGH, M.A.—"Thy Will be Done." By E. GRIFFITH-JONES, B.A.—The Prayer for Daily Bread. By E. GRIFFITH-JONES, B.A.—"Give us this Day our Daily Bread." By PRINCIPAL ALEXANDER STEWART, D.D.—The Prayer for Forgiveness. By E. GRIFFITH-JONES, B.A.—Forgiveness: A Problem of the Lord's Prayer. By PRINCIPAL P. T. FORSYTH, M.A., D.D.—"Bring us not into Temptation." By E. GRIFFITH-JONES, B.A.—The Benediction of Trial. By FRANK BALLARD, M.A., B.Sc.—"Deliver us from Evil." By E. GRIFFITH-JONES, B.A.—"Deliver us from Evil." By J. G. GREENHOUGH, M.A.—The Doxology. By E. GRIFFITH-JONES, B.A.—What the Church owes to the Lord's Prayer. By E. GRIFFITH-JONES, B.A.

The Sermon on the Mount

A Practical Exposition of Matthew vi. 16—vii. 27.

By Various Authors.

cr 8vo, cloth gilt, 4s. 6d. *net*.

CONTENTS.—Fasting (Matt. vi. 16-18). By W. B. SELBIE, M.A.—Treasures in Heaven (Matt. vi. 19-23). By W. B. SELBIE, M.A.—Treasures in Heaven (Matt. vi. 19-21). By ALBERT GOODRICH, D.D.—The Single Eye (Matt. vi. 22-23). By ALBERT GOODRICH, D.D.—The Two Masters (Matt. vi. 24). By ALBERT GOODRICH, D.D.—Anxious Cares (Matt. vi. 24-34). By GEORGE MILLIGAN, B.D.—The Teaching of the Flowers (Matt. vi. 28-30). By J. G. GREENHOUGH, M.A.—The Needlessness of Anxiety (Matt. vi. 31-32). By J. G. GREENHOUGH, M.A.—Seeking the Kingdom (Matt. vi. 33). By PRINCIPAL D. ROWLANDS, B.A.—The Day and its Duty (Matt. vi. 34). By J. MORGAN GIBBON.—Judge Not (Matt. vii. 1-6). By W. B. SELBIE, M.A.—Reforming Busybodies (Matt. vii. 3-5). By THOMAS G. SELBY.—Ask, Seek, Knock (Matt. vii. 7). By J. G. GREENHOUGH, M.A.—The Reasonableness of Prayer (Matt. vii. 7). By ALFRED ROWLAND, D.D., LL.B.—Ask and it shall be Given (Matt. vii. 7-12). By W. B. SELBIE, M.A.—The Strait Gate (Matt. vi. 13-14). By ALBERT GOODRICH, D.D.—The Test of the Spirit (Matt. vii. 15-20). By THOMAS G. SELBY.—Self-Deception (Matt. vii. 21-23). By ALBERT GOODRICH, D.D.—The Wise and the Foolish Builders (Matt. vii. 24-27). By GEORGE MILLIGAN, B.D.—The Two Builders (Matt. vii. 24-27). By PRINCIPAL ALEX. STEWART, D.D.

The Miracles of Jesus

By

Various Authors.

cr 8vo, cloth gilt, 6s. net.

CONTENTS.—The Place of Miracles in the Gospel History, by E. Griffith Jones, B.A.—The Water Turned into Wine, by J. G. Greenhough, M.A.—The Healing of the Nobleman's Son, by Albert Goodrich, D.D.—The First Miraculous Draught of Fishes, by George Milligan, B.D.—The Stilling of the Tempest, by J. Morgan Gibbon.—The Demoniacs in the Country of the Gadarenes, by J. Morgan Gibbon.—The Raising of Jairus' Daughter, by Alfred Rowland, D.D., LL.B.—The Healing of the Woman with an Issue of Blood, by W. J. Townsend, D.D.—The Opening of the Eyes of Two Blind, by Alfred Rowland, D.D., LL.B.—The Healing of the Paralytic, by J. G. Greenhough, M.A.—The Cleansing of the Leper, by George Milligan, B.D.—The Healing of the Centurion's Servant, by George Milligan, B.D.—The Demoniac in the Synagogue of Capernaum, by George Milligan, B.D.—The Healing of Simon's Wife's Mother, by Principal Alexander Stewart, D.D.—The Raising of the Widow's Son, by George H. Morrison, M.A.—The Healing of the Impotent Man at Bethesda, by Thomas G. Selby.—The Miraculous Feeding of Five Thousand, by J. G. Greenhough, M.A.—The Walking on the Sea, by Principal D. Rowlands, B.A.—The Opening of the Eyes of one born Blind, by J. G. Greenhough, M.A.—The Restoring of the Man with a Withered Hand, by Alfred Rowland, D.D., LL.B.—The Restoring of the Woman with a Spirit of Infirmity, by Alfred Rowland, D.D., LL.B.—The Healing of the Man with a Dropsy, by George Milligan, B.D.—The Cleansing of the Ten Lepers, by E. Griffith Jones, B.A.—The Healing of the Daughter of the Syro-Phœnician Woman, by W. J. Townsend, D.D.—The Healing of one Deaf and Dumb, by Alfred Rowland, D.D., LL.B.—The Miraculous Feeding of Four Thousand, by George Milligan, B.D.—The Opening of the Eyes of one Blind (at Bethsaida), by the late Hugh Macmillan, D.D., LL.D.—The Demoniac, by J. G. Greenhough, M.A.—The Coin in the Fish's Mouth, by George Milligan, B.D.—The Raising of Lazarus, by Principal Alexander Stewart, D.D.—Blind Bartimæus, by J. G. Greenhough, M.A.—The Cursing of the Barren Fig Tree, by Alfred Rowland, D.D., LL.B.—The Healing of Malchus' Ear, by Thomas G. Selby.—The Second Miraculous Draught of Fishes, by E. Griffith Jones, B.A.

The Parables of Jesus,

By

Various Authors.

thick cr 8vo, cloth gilt, 6s net.

CONTENTS.—**Teaching by Parables** (Matt. xiii. 10), by George H. Morrison, M.A.—**The Choking Thorn** (Matt. xiii. 22), by J. G. Greenhough, M.A.—**The Seed in Stony Places** (Luke viii. 13), by J. G. Greenhough, M.A.—**The Wheat and the Tares** (Matt. xiii. 28-30), by J. G. Greenhough, M.A.—**The Mustard Seed** (Matt. xiii. 31-32), by Albert Goodrich, D.D.—**The Leaven** (Luke xiii. 21), by J. G. Greenhough, M.A.—**The Treasure and the Pearl** (Matt. xiii. 44-46), by Thomas G. Selby—**The Treasure and the Pearl** (Matt. xiii. 44-46), by Alfred Rowland, D.D., LL.B.—**The Drag-Net** (Matt. xiii. 47-48), by Albert Goodrich, D.D.—**The Unmerciful Servant** (Matt. xviii. 33), by Alfred Rowland, D.D., LL.B.—**The Labourers in the Vineyard** (Matt. xx. 12-13), by J. G. Greenhough, M.A.—**The Labourers in the Vineyard** (Matt. xx. 1-16), by George Milligan, B.D.—**The Two Sons** (Matt. xxi. 28-32), by J. G. Greenhough, M.A.—**The Wicked Husbandman** (Matt. xxi. 33-41), by Principal Alexander Stewart, D.D.—**The Wedding Feast and the Wedding Garment** (Matt. xx. 1-14), by Albert Goodrich, D.D.—**The Ten Virgins** (Matt. xxv. 1-13), by Principal Alexander Stewart, D.D.—**The Talents** (Matt. xxv. 15), by J. Morgan Gibbon—**The Parables of Pounds and Talents** (Matt. xv. 14-30, Luke xix. 11-28), by Thomas G. Selby—**The Seed Growing Secretly** (Mark iv. 28), by E. Griffith-Jones, B.A.—**The Two Debtors** (Luke vii. 41-50) by Albert Goodrich, D.D.—**The Good Samaritan** (Luke x. 36), by W. J. Townsend, D.D.—**The Selfish Neighbour** (Luke xi. 5-13), by Albert Goodrich, D.D.—**The Rich Fool** (Luke xii. 16-21), by Principal D. Rowlands, B.A.—**The Barren Fig Tree** (Luke xiii. 6-9), by Principal Alexander Stewart, D.D.—**The Great Supper** (Luke xiv. 16-24), by George Milligan, B.D.—**The Lost Sheep** (Luke xv. 1-7), by Principal Alexander Stewart, D.D.—**The Lost Piece of Silver** (Luke xv. 8-10), by George H. Morrison, B.D.—**The Prodigal Son** (Luke xv. 19), by J. G. Greenhough, M.A.—**The Prodigal's Elder Brother** (Luke xv. 11-32), by Frank Ballard, M.A., B.Sc.—**The Unjust Steward** (Luke xvi. 1-13) by George Milligan, B.D.—**The Rich Man and Lazarus** (Luke xvi. 19-31) by Principal Alexander Stewart, D.D.—**Unprofitable Servants** (Luke xvii. 7-10), by Albert Goodrich, D.D.—**The Unjust Judge** (Luke xviii. 1-8) by Albert Goodrich, D.D.—**The Pharisee and the Publican** (Luke xviii. 14), by W. J. Townsend, D.D.—**The Pounds** (Luke xix. 11-27), by J. Morgan Gibbon,

Comradeship and Character,

Sermons and Addresses to Young Men, by

Various Authors.

cr 8vo, cloth gilt, 3s. 6d. net.

CONTENTS.—**Comradeship and Character**, by Thos. G. Selby.—**True Manliness**, by Thos. Waugh.—**Work, Wine, and Women**, by Dr. Chas. Leach.—**The Rejoicings of Youth**, by J. G. Greenhough, M.A.—**True Riches**, by W. B. Selbie, M.A.—**Temptation**, by Bernard J. Snell, M.A., B.Sc.—**The Potency of Taste**, by Frank Ballard, M.A., B.Sc.—**The Great Refusal**, by George Jackson, B.A.—**Joy and Consecration**, by E. Griffith-Jones, B.A.—**Brotherhood and Redemption**, by Thos. G. Selby.—**A Strong Man**, by Geo. Milligan, B.D.—**The Force of Noble Leadership**, by J. G. Greenhough, M.A.—**Three Precious Gems**, by J. A. Clapperton, M.A.—**The Doctrine of Excuses**, by Geo. H. Morrison, M.A.—**Wordsworth's Ode to Duty**, by T. Rhondda Williams.—**Trust in God**, by Principal D. Rowlands.—**Heart-Giving and Heart-Keeping**, by E. Griffith-Jones, B.A.—**Early Besetments**, by Thos. G. Selby.—**The Tragedy of a Selfish Ambition**, by J. G. Greenhough, M.A.—**The Bundle of Life**, by J. Morgan Gibbon.

"Straight, manly talks, as from one brother to another—plain, practical, common-sense counsel and helpful sympathy and encouragement. I hope this book will find its way into the hands of many young fellows."—*Christian Commonwealth*.

"A well-nigh ideal list of preachers to young men. Every title is full of suggestion. This is a most praiseworthy and powerful volume."—*Methodist Weekly*.

"Fresh, pointed, and practical. . . . Worthy of a wide circulation among young men."—*Aberdeen Journal*.

"It is some time since we read a volume so admirably adapted the needs of young men."—*Primitive Methodist*.

"Sound, practical addresses to young men."—*Methodist Times*.

"Able and thoughtful, vivid and pointed."—*Glasgow Herald*.

"There is an honest, manly ring in them all."—*Huddersfield Examiner*.

"A helpful and suggestive volume of addresses to young men, which contains wholesome moral advice and religious counsel."—*Scottish Guardian*.

"They are clear, strong, direct talks to young men on topics of vital importance."—*S. S. Banner*.

"An admirable collection of addresses to young men, marked by an earnest straight-forwardness which will arrest the attention of young men."—*Preacher's Magazine*.

"They lead us up the mountain path of noble service and devotion, and stir the blood to achieve the highest work to which young men can bend their powers."—*Baptist*.

"A bracing book with many wise counsels as to friends and moral training."—*London Quarterly Review*.

Jesus in the Cornfield,

Sermons for Harvest and Flower Festivals,

By

Various Authors.

cr 8vo, cloth gilt, 3s. 6d. net.

CONTENTS.—Jesus in the Cornfield, by Alfred Rowland, D.D., LL.B.—Bread and Forgiveness, by J. Morgan Gibbon.—A Harvest Greeting, by Hugh Macmillan, D.D., LL.D.—Transformers or Con-formers (Flower Sermon), by J. A. Clapperton, M.A.—Our Daily Bread, by Charles Leach, D.D.—Nature's Mystery of Good, by Frank Ballard, M.A., B.Sc.—Rain, Snow, and the Fruitful Word, by Thos. G. Selby.—The Forgotten Sheaf, by George H. Morrison, M.A.—Harvest Lessons from the Feeding of the Five Thousand, by George Milligan, B.D.—The Ark in the Harvest-Field of Beth-Shemesh, by Hugh Macmillan, D.D., LL.D.—A Plea for Perseverance, by E. Griffith-Jones, B.A.—The Harvest of Light, by Joseph Halsey.—The Duty and Joy of Gratitude, by Bernard J. Snell, M.A., B.Sc.—Sowing and Reaping, by J. G. Greenhough, M.A.—Gratitude for Divine Mercies, by Principal D. Rowlands, B.A.—The Blossoming Rod (Flower Sermon), by Alfred Rowland, D.D., LL.B.—The Spirit of the Harvest-Giver, by J. A. Clapperton, M.A.—The Happy People, by J. Morgan Gibbon.—The Temporal and the Spiritual, by T. Rhondda Williams.—Good Things of God, by James Thew.

"A wealth of beautiful thought."—*Methodist Weekly*.

"Will afford many an apt illustration and welcome suggestion."
—*Christian Age*.

"... must be very acceptable to students and preachers who look for suggestive hints. It is a collection of homiletic masterpieces."—*Christian Commonwealth*.

"All the sermons are good, and have the merits of freshness, variety and pertinence."—*Baptist Magazine*.

"If the sale of this book could be confined to preachers, we are afraid that there would be seen glittering in our pulpits some borrowed jewels from this beautiful jewel case. As it is, we have no doubt many suggestions as to the setting of their own jewels will be found and used by some of our busy ministers."—*Baptist*.

"The contributors to this volume is a sufficient indication of its merit. The sermons are fresh, and full of thought and suggestion."
—*Weekly Leader*.

"A score of choice sermons, thoroughly representative."—*Christian Advocate*.

"Distinctly fresh and stimulating."—*Christian World*.

"Pleasant to read and rich in good counsel."—*London Quarterly Review*.

"An abundance of thought and power of exposition is evident in the pages of this instructive volume."—*Liverpool Mercury*.

"Ripe thoughts ready for the gleaner."—*Dundee Advertiser*

The Cross and the Dice-Box,

Sermons and Addresses to Working Men,

By

Various Authors.

cr 8vo, cloth gilt, 3s. 6d. net.

CONTENTS.—The Cross and the Dice Box, by Thos. G. Selby.—The Castle and the Cottage, by Dr. Chas. Leach.—The Law of Christ concerning Controversy and Reconciliation, by E. Griffith-Jones, B.A.: I. PERSONAL DISPUTES; II. INDUSTRIAL DISPUTES; III. INTERNATIONAL DISPUTES.—The Man with the Muck-rake, by George Jackson, B.A.—The Workman and his Overseer, by J. G. Greenhough, M.A.—Tips, by Chas H. Shave.—Christ's New Doctrine of Brotherhood, by Dr. Chas. Leach.—The Value of a Man, by J. G. Greenhough, M.A.—Bad Temper, by Thomas G. Selby.—All Souls, by Bernard J. Snell, M.A., B.Sc.—The Man who is Best Worth Talking about, by J. G. Greenhough, M.A.—Sacredness of Work, by Geo. Milligan, B.D.—The Question of the Ages, by Thos. Waugh.—What of the Night? by Principal D. Rowlands.—A Button Short, by Chas. H. Shave.—Unclean Speech and the Tainted Soul, by Thos. G. Selby.—Looking on the Other Side, by J. G. Greenhough, M.A.—Parsons and Politics, by Dr. Chas. Leach.

"We have nothing but commendation to offer this series of addresses to working-men. All are written in a pointed vigorous style. We could imagine no better gift-book for such organizations as the P.S.A."—*Y.M.C.A. Guide, Glasgow*.

"Leaders of P.S.A.'s and Men's Meetings will find it full of help."—*Christian Age*.

"The book is a budget of good things."—*Methodist Weekly*.

"Will interest men of all classes. They are excellent specimens of varied styles for Sunday afternoon meetings."—*Preacher's Magazine*.

"They have a freedom, directness and brevity the ordinary sermon can seldom claim."—*Primitive Methodist*.

"Every page is shaped with reference to the exigencies of the time through which we are passing."—*Christian Commonwealth*.

"All the addresses are good. They are popular in style."—*Aberdeen Journal*.

"The spirit of the volume is healthy and wholesome, and its pleading is direct."—*Christian Life*.

"The preaching of C.S.U. sermons has become an annual event, and we are occasionally asked to recommend suitable subjects and books. Under the title of 'The Cross and the Dice Box,' a collection of sermons on various social questions has been issued. Most of the sermons are useful expositions of the subjects chosen, and as the book contains twenty sermons, there is sufficient variety."—*Scottish Guardian*.

"Full of strong sense, which cannot fail to make a lasting impression."—*London Quarterly Review*.

"They are sensible talks, right out from the shoulder."—*Christian Endeavour World, Boston, U.S.A.*

Eden and Gethsemane,

Sermons and Addresses for Communion Services,

By

Various Authors.

cr 8vo, cloth gilt, 3s. 6d. net.

CONTENTS.—**Eden and Gethsemane**, by Principal Alex. Stewart, D.D.—**Christ on the Cross, and the Cross borne by the Christian**, by Principal Alex. Stewart, D.D.—**Fitness for the Lord's Supper**, by J. Morgan Gibbon.—**The Sacramental Remembrance and Testimony**, by Thos. G. Selby.—**The Meaning of the Feast**, by J. G. Greenhough, M.A.—**What mean ye by this Service?** by Geo. Milligan, B.D.—**A Lenten Meditation**, by Bernard J. Snell, M.A., B.Sc.—**Peter's Denial**, by Geo. H. Morrison, M.A.—**The Lord's Supper and Personal Faith**, by A. Goodrich, D.D.—**The Sacramental Aspect of Common Things**, by J. G. Greenhough, M.A.—**The Lord's Supper**, by Bernard J. Snell, M.A., B.Sc.—**The Sufferings of Christ**, by George Milligan, B.D.—**The Heart of Christianity**, by J. A. Clapperton, M.A.—**The Power and Peril of a Divine Symbol**, by J. G. Greenhough, M.A.—**Communion**, by T. Rhondda Williams.—**Religion in Daily Life**, by George Milligan, B.D.—**The Social Value of the Lord's Supper**, by J. Morgan Gibbon.—**The Communion**, by T. Rhondda Williams.

"The addresses are reverent in tone and deeply devotional, and are valuable alike for private reading in preparation for the Communion or as suggestions to ministers to give Communion Addresses."—*Preacher's Magazine*.

"It is refreshing to one's soul to read such quickening messages upon such a theme. To all Christians, young and old alike, it would afford much thought for reflection as to the necessity of Christ's institution of it, and why Christians ought to observe it."—*Canadian Congregationalist*.

"All the discourses are excellent in character, and contain much real spiritual teaching."—*Weekly Leader*.

"Ministers will find this book most helpful."—*Irish Presbyterian*.

"Beautifully suggestive, and should prove a real help to ministers."—*Meth. New Connexion Magazine*.

"Stimulating and suggestive. They are rich in thought."—*London Quarterly Review*.

"Exquisitely beautiful are the three sermons by the Very Rev. Principal Stewart. Where all is so excellent it is almost invidious to particularise."—*Christian Commonwealth*.

"... Full of beautiful thoughts expressed in touching and eloquent language."—*Liverpool Mercury*.

"These are excellent in matter and style, being both hortatory and devotional without any suggestion of doctrinal difficulties."—*Glasgow Herald*.

The Divine Artist,

Sermons of Consolation, by

Various Authors.

cr 8vo, cloth gilt, 3s. 6d. net.

CONTENTS.—**The Divine Artist**, by Hugh Macmillan, D.D., LL.D.—**Victory!** by J. H. Jowett, M.A.—**Comfort**, by Principal Alex. Stewart, D.D.—**The Eternal and the Temporal**, by J. G. Greenhough, M.A.—**From Stress to Triumph**, by Thos. G. Selby.—**The Cloud of Witnesses**, by Geo. Milligan, B.D.—**Jonah and Paul** (Two Views of Death), by Principal Alex. Stewart, D.D.—**Law, Sin and Death**, by J. G. Greenhough, M.A.—**The Death of the Righteous**, by J. A. Clapperton, M.A.—**The Ark and its New Sanctuary**, by Thos. G. Selby.—**Sorrow for Departed Friends**, by Principal D. Rowlands, B.A.—**Sympathy**, by Principal Alex. Stewart, D.D.—**Funeral of Joseph**, by Hugh Macmillan, D.D.—**The Resurrection and the Life**, by Geo. Milligan, B.D.—**The Invisible Witnesses**, by J. G. Greenhough, M.A.—**Sermon of Reflection**, by T. Rhondda Williams.

"There is a tone of optimism running throughout the sixteen sermons of this volume that is cheering. . . . They are all Evangelical and of high merit. . . . It will be found a fountain of consolation to the weary. It is a capital book for young ministers and local preachers."—*Christian Commonwealth*.

"Full of helpful words."—*London Quarterly Review*.

"The prevalent tone is aidful and stimulating."—*Outlook*.

"He would be a captious critic who could find anything but praise for the sixteen very admirable sermons of which this volume is comprised."—*Methodist Weekly*.

"All the sermons are good, full of broad human sympathy."—*Aberdeen Journal*.

" . . . of a highly spiritual and comfortable character."—*Weekly Leader*.

"As full of well selected matter as an egg is full of meat."—*Liverpool Mercury*.

"The writers approach their subject from a great many different points of view, but the level maintained is high, and the sermons are all excellent."—*Glasgow Herald*.

"Any who are weary in their fight against sin, or perplexed at sorrows heaped upon sorrows, should find in these pages strength to continue their struggle for goodness and consolation in their hours of pain."—*Examiner*.

"Earnest, thoughtful discourses, will well repay perusal."—*Irish Presbyterian*.

"The subjects are remarkably well chosen, and the preachers are exactly suited to their themes. . . . a high level of excellence throughout. Many of the sermons are gems."—*Methodist New Connexion Magazine*.

The Children's Year,

Fifty-two Short Addresses to Boys and Girls,

By

J. Morgan Gibbon.

cr 8vo, cloth gilt, 3s. 6d. net.

CONTENTS:—Jack. Christmas Day. Shining Lives. A Flower Prayer. God's Poem. A Little Staff. A Little Hymn. Coming to Jesus. Blocking the Way. The Almond Tree. Growing up. Rain and Snow. The Golden Psalm. A Bad Memory. Wasted Sundays. The Animals Prayer. Thou. Imitation. Spring Time. Flowers and Birds. Ladies and Gentlemen. What is it all for? A Lion Story. A Queer Excuse. The Census. The White Sunday. Dennoch. Two Flash-Points. Nagging. Bullying. The Language of Flowers. Consider the Lilies. Capital "I." Jesus Christ's Holiday. Yes. A Royal House. Gathering or Scattering. The Eye of the Heart. God's Gifts. God's Voice. Goodness. Nutting. Safe in God's great Care. A Lesson in Prayer. A Story of Four. Jesus called a Little Child. Praising God. Our Shepherd. The Every-Day Christ. Feed my Lambs. At Table. Christmas Stockings.

Addresses to Boys, Girls, and Young People,

By

T. Rhondda Williams.

cr 8vo, cloth gilt, 3s. 6d. net.

CONTENTS:—Jesus Christ's Birthday (for Boys and Girls). Christmas Bells (for Boys and Girls). Rules of the Road (Boys' Brigade). The Gifts of God (Boys and Girls). How shall we Grow? (Boys and Girls). How a Boy helped a Man (Boys and Girls). He would and he didn't: He would not and he did (Boys). There is a Lad here (Boys' Brigade). What the Ants teach (Boys). The Message of Spring (Boys and Girls). Cycling as a Picture of Life (Young People). Home and Circuit, Two Spheres of Soul-Life (Young People). The Summons of the Twentieth Century (Youths). The Child's Angel (Young People). The Joy of Youth and the Judgment of Age (Youths). The Three-fold Reverence that makes a Man (Young People). Who is Your Friend? (Young People). Habit (Young People). What time is it? (Young People). Some Trials of Youth (Young People).

Extempore Prayer,

Its Principles, Preparation and Practice,

By

Rev. M. P. Talling, Ph.D.,

Of Toronto.

cr 8vo, cloth, 3s. 6d. net.

"There is no book of the month that has seemed more timely or that has given us more to think about than Dr. Talling's *Extempore Prayer*."—*Expository Times*.

"So far as we know there is no work on the subject so sensible, so comprehensive, and so satisfactory as this."—*Baptist Magazine*.

"Those who have the privilege of reading this work will be surprised to find how much can be said about the philosophy, the methods, the aims, and the principles of prayer. The 'Architecture of Prayer' is the subject of a very original and beautiful chapter. His pages are characterised by common sense."—*Christian Commonwealth*.

"To such as have to lead the devotions of congregations this book must be helpful."—*Primitive Methodist*.

"The effect of a careful perusal of this book by preachers would be to enrich their pulpit powers."—*Methodist Recorder*.

Heavenly Harmonies for Earthly Living,

By

Malcolm J. McLeod.

cr 8vo, cloth, 2s. net.

"Sparkling and lively sermons, enriched with copious illustrations."—*Baptist Magazine*.

"Racy, interesting, and impressive . . . vivid . . . the illustrations are invariably striking and to the point."—*Aberdeen Journal*.

"Helpful sermons."—*Rock*.

"They are poetical and artistic, replete with pleasant illustrations, and aglow with evangelistic fervour."—*Methodist Recorder*.

"The addresses are manly, vigorous, fresh, clear, practical and evangelical. Moreover, they abound in illustrations drawn from various sources."—*Methodist Weekly*.

"They are full of illustration, and the illustrations are exceptionally beautiful and arresting."—*Primitive Methodist*.

"An excellent series of sermons. They are full of thought and illustration."—*Weekly Leader*

The Unaccountable Man,

A Volume of Twenty-Nine Sermons,

By

David James Burrell, D.D.,

cr 8vo, cloth, 3s. 6d. net.

"SELDOM has it been our privilege to peruse so charming a volume of sermons. We have much pleasure in commending this volume of powerful sermons by a prominent American divine."
—*Aberdeen Daily Journal*.

"These sermons are strongly Evangelical, they give evidence of considerable reading and knowledge, and are brightened up by many apt and original illustrations."—*Primitive Methodist*.

"The style is clear and direct, the matter is solid and plentiful, and quotations from authors, ancient and modern, are often introduced very appositely."—*Christian World*.

The Rise of a Soul,

A Stimulant to Personal Progress and Development,
(Addresses to Young Men),

By

James I. Vance, D.D.

cr 8vo, cloth, 3s. 6d. net.

"They are all beautiful addresses, those of a man with intellectual grasp, literary taste, and wide reading."—*Primitive Methodist*.

"An eloquent series of chapters . . . The Book is well adapted for circulation amongst young men who will be stirred and stimulated by it."—*Preacher's Magazine*.

"Young men should get this book, and read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest its contents."—*Baptist Magazine*.

Twenty-Four Sermons on Gospel Themes,

By

Chas. G. Finney,

cr 8vo, cloth, 3s. 6d. net.

"THEY are vigorous discourses, the teaching of which is still fresh and stimulating."—*Scotsman*.

"Full of spiritual power, courage, and suggestion."—*Bookman*.

"Keen, incisive, trenchant—logic set on fire."—*Baptist Magazine*

The Wonderful Teacher,

A Volume of Twenty-Six Sermons,
By

David James Burrell, D.D.,

Of New York.

cr 8vo, cloth, 3s. 6d. net.

"Dr. Burrell is a strong and powerful preacher; his message is full and clear, and is always straight and encouraging. The many illustrations and quotations which Dr. Burrell employs are always pointed and full of interest."—*Weekly Leader*.

"We welcome in this volume an admirable compendium of theological thought . . . Not a page is perplexing, but every chapter is deeply thoughtful."—*Christian Commonwealth*.

The Church in the Fort,

A Volume of Twenty-Eight Sermons,
By

David James Burrell, D.D.,

Of New York.

cr 8vo, cloth, 3s. 6d. net.

"The discourses throughout are lively and practical."—*Baptist Magazine*.

"Dr. Burrell bids fair to take the foremost place among the American preachers whose sermons appeal to us."—*Expository Times*.

"This popular preacher has never given us finer work than these sermons on out-of-the-way subjects."—*Irish Presbyterian*.

Typical New Testament Conversions,

Sixteen Discourses,
By

Dr. Frederick A. Noble,

cr 8vo, cloth, 3s. 6d. net.

"It is a model-book for preachers, and any who are looking for an excellent review of the subject of conversion as illustrated in the Bible will here find all that can be desired."—*Christian Commonwealth*.

"The book will be a valuable acquisition, especially to Christian workers who have not deeply pondered this question."—*The Christian*

Lectures on Preaching,

By

Bp. Phillips Brooks.

cr 8vo, cloth, 2s. 6d. net.

"It is a book of permanent value."—*Expository Times*.

"These valuable lectures constitute a really great book."—*Baptist Magazine*.

"Well worth reading and re-reading by young clergy. They can hardly study the great preacher's methods without learning much, very much to help and strengthen them."—*Church Times*.

The Influence of Jesus

on the

Social, Emotional, and Intellectual Life of Man,

By

Bp. Phillips Brooks.

cr 8vo, cloth, 2s. 6d. net.

"The Influence of Jesus' is theologically the most characteristic of all Bishop Brooks' works. So if one would understand the man we must read this book."—*Expository Times*.

Expository Discourses on Philippians,

By

Dr. Frederick A. Noble,

cr 8vo, cloth, 3s. 6d. net.

"THE style is remarkably like that of Alexander McLaren in that expository preaching of which he is an acknowledged master. It is one of the very best examples of scholarly, popular exposition that has recently appeared."—*The Standard*.

"Force of thought, grace of expression, and aptness of illustration are everywhere illustrated."—*Baptist Magazine*.

"They have great merit. . . . He does not throw away a pointed modern illustration, but he counts it his business just to let the apostle speak for himself."—*Expository Times*.

Preaching in the New Age,

An Art and an Incarnation,

By

A. J. Lyman, D.D.,

Pastor of the South Congregational Church, Brooklyn.

cr 8vo, cloth, 2s. 6d. net.

"A wise and stimulating guide. . . . Rarely has a more instructive and helpful volume appeared."—*Baptist Magazine*.

"'Preaching in the New Age,' by Dr. Lyman, is a book which may be well recommended to all ministers."—*Weekly Leader*.

" . . . Many useful hints, many gems of thought that will remain with the budding preacher as an abiding possession."—*Aberdeen Daily Journal*.

Evolution and Man, Here and Hereafter,

By

John Wesley Conley, D.D.

cr 8vo, cloth, 2s. 6d. net.

"We have been greatly pleased with this sane, instructive, and helpful volume."—*Baptist Magazine*.

"It is a right reasonable book. Those whom it appeals to should certainly seek it out and read it carefully."—*Expository Times*.

"A more illuminating and suggestive and truly helpful book on the subject we have not come across."—*Primitive Methodist*.

The Sunnyside of Christianity,

By

Dr. Charles H. Parkhurst,

Of New York.

cr 8vo, cloth, 2s. net.

"Admirable specimens of the American pulpit."—*British Weekly*.

"Remarkably clear style and forceful illustrations, . . . well repays the reader by the illustrations alone."—*Primitive Methodist*.

"Every page is freshly original and every chapter is full of suggestive thought."—*Christian Commonwealth*.

Limitations of Life,

A Volume of Twenty-Five Sermons,

By

Dr. Wm. M. Taylor,

8vo, cloth, 3s. 6d. net.

"**C**LEAR thinking, apt illustration, earnest and tender appeal, distinguish the volume."—*Freeman*.

"These are vigorous sermons—racy in expression, keen in analysis, eloquent in style, evangelical in doctrine and with all the pathos which a large-hearted humanity gives."—*Methodist Recorder*.

The Boy Jesus,

A Volume of Twenty-Three Sermons,

By

Dr. Wm. M. Taylor,

8vo, cloth, 3s. 6d. net.

"No preacher who wishes to increase his pulpit usefulness will ever regret having carefully studied this volume."—*English Churchman*.

"The same good honest writing appears in Dr. Taylor's sermons as in his volumes on the miracles and the parables. And in the selection of subjects he shows a freshness of thought which often leads to an interesting sermon."—*Guardian*.

"They are the kind of sermons to promote thought and lead to true Godliness."—*Christian*.

Contrary Winds,

A Volume of Twenty-Four Sermons,

By

Dr. Wm. M. Taylor,

8vo, cloth, 3s. 6d. net.

"They are prepared by a mind at least abreast of the times. With an analysis quite scientific, and close argumentative reasoning, the intention of the preacher to be understood is most manifest, and he has imprinted the stamp of a most vigorous mind on every page of this volume. Twenty-four Sermons of this character are quite sufficient to make any man's fame."—*Clergyman's Magazine*.

"A storehouse of illustration as well as a treasury of exposition. The Sermons are full of freshness, and though not evangelistic are evangelical."—*Christian*.

